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Ronald A. Hoskinson's Gulf War Diary



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This is a first hand account of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Everything described in the following pages actually happened. The observations and opinions expressed herein are mine and mine alone, and I take full responsibility for them.

In most cases, names have been changed (or omitted) to protect individuals' privacy.

Warning: This account contains information that is (at times) graphic and perhaps disturbing to some people.

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"Change of Command"

August 1, 1990 was a typical sunny, muggy day at Fort Hood, located in the hill country of Central Texas. At 0900 hours, the sun was already beating oppressively down upon the soldiers of C Battery, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, who stood in formation awaiting the ceremony during which Captain Joe

Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, who stood in formation awaiting the ceremony during which Captain Joe E. Gallagher, the Battery Commander, would relinquish the battery guidon to me, a timeless Army ritual signifying the change of command from one officer to the next.

As I stood on the parade field in the battalion quadrangle awaiting to assume command of this outfit, I thought about the last five years of my life, all of which were essentially spent preparing me both personally and professionally for this day: to take command of a firing battery.

I was a typical field artillery captain in the United States Army, with a little more than five years of active service. Commissioned as a second lieutenant from the University of Virginia ROTC program on May 18, 1985, I attended the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Following successful completion of that school, I was posted to Schweinfurt, Germany, where I served three years in a self - propelled M109A3 howitzer battalion assigned to the Third Infantry Division (Mechanized).

After rotating back to the United States, I attended the Officer Advanced Course, and was subsequently assigned to Fort Hood, Texas, where I served as the Fire Direction Officer for the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery prior to taking command of Battery C. While serving as FDO, I rotated twice to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, located deep in the Mojave desert, where I received realistic mechanized desert warfare training against an opposing force that was trained and equipped to replicate a typical Soviet motorized rifle regiment.

In summary, like many other officers of my rank and level of experience, I had been trained primarily to fight the Soviets in a European (or regional) Cold War scenario. I had a good deal of mechanized warfare experience, and a moderate amount of desert warfare experience.

C Battery, the unit that I was about to take command of that day, was a typical self - propelled howitzer battery assigned within the continental United States. With it's eight M109A3 howitzers, two fire direction centers, 114 soldiers, and enough ammunition and support vehicles to keep everybody shooting, fueled, and fed, C Battery stood ready to deploy to Europe along with the rest of the First Cavalry Division, and reinforce the forward - deployed forces in the Federal Republic of Germany against a Warsaw Pact invasion.

To facilitate its deployment to Europe, most of C Battery's "go to war" equipment was prepositioned in Germany. This was our primary mission, our *raison d'etre*; however, with the recent thawing of east - west relations and the impending reunification of Germany, the threat of war, while always a possibility, seemed remote.

Like many other CONUS -- based heavy units, C Battery was generally well trained, but was not at the peak of its readiness cycle. Its last rotation to the National Training Center had been eight months previous; its last Standard External Evaluation had been six months ago. Since then C Battery had undergone a 50 percent personnel turnover rate, and had spent one month in "red cycle", a term used in the military to indicate that a unit's primary function would be installation support, as opposed to training and maintenance.

August 1, 1990, in addition to my assumption of command, also marked the first day of an intensive six month training cycle for C Battery. This training cycle was designed to bring the outfit up to peak combat readiness, and would culminate in a rotation to the National Training Center in February 1991. Therefore, my biggest priority as new commander was to train my unit hard over the next several months so that we would be able to defeat the NTC opposing forces in the mock battles that we would have in the Mojave desert the following February.

However, on August 2, 1990, the "world turned upside down". Responding to Iraq's lightning conquest of Kuwait, and under the direction of the National Command Authority, C Battery, with the rest of the First Cavalry Division, was able to shift gears from its REFORGER mission to respond to the current threat. The battery deployed deliberately and efficiently to Southwest Asia, lived and trained in the desert for five months under conditions that most Americans would find intolerable, and finally, was a key participant in the liberation of Kuwait. That they were able to do this is a tribute not only to the men

of C Battery, but also to the decade - long revolution in training and doctrine within the U.S. Army, which sewed the seeds of excellence that enabled units like C Battery, 3-82 FA to accomplish such a feat. Here is our story.

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"The alert that would never end"

On August 2, 1990, at 0530 hours, I turned my television set on and tuned in CNN's Headline News. On a routine basis, I watched Headline News before going to work in the morning; being a "news junkie", I enjoyed going to work knowing what was going on in the world, and this morning was no exception. One of the stories that I had been following was Iraq's mobilization of troops on Kuwait's border, and the flurry of diplomatic activity that was going on to resolve the situation. Since my father was a U.S. Army officer with extensive Middle East experience, I had developed a lifelong fascination with Arab life, politics, religion, and conflict.

The headline that morning hit me like a ton of bricks. I knew immediately that Iraq's blitzkrieg of Kuwait had severe implications for the rest of the world. I also knew that if Saddam Hussein ordered his troops to seize Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, he would control 40 percent of the world's oil. This outrage, I believed, would generate some kind of response from us; there was no doubt in my mind about that. The key question was: how severe of a response ?

Once I got to work, I assembled my lieutenants for my "new commander's orientation briefing." I decided to use this incident as an object lesson to emphasize to my officers the importance of remaining combat ready at all times. This was a severe threat to our national interests that would generate some kind of response, I told them. Peace had not in fact broken out all over, using a popular catch phrase of the day. I explained to them that we could find ourselves in combat very soon. While I personally felt that the possibility of combat involving U.S. forces was still remote, I felt that this was nonetheless a good teaching point for these young officers. Little did I know how prophetic my words would be.

As exciting as this latest international crisis was, my priority was attending to the important, though humdrum, battery business at hand: preparing for the next day's unit Organization Day, and certifying howitzer section chiefs and gunners to ensure that they would be able to fire their weapons safely during next week's battery field training exercise.

Battalion Organization Day is an annual event that is held to commemorate the history and traditions of a unit. It is the Army's equivalent to a country fair for a battalion's soldiers and families, and features athletic events, equipment displays, and a picnic lunch. Each battery normally hosts one or two events, and the mess hall cooks hundreds of hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans, and potato salad. If planned correctly, it usually turns out to be a pretty festive affair.

On August 3, 3-82 FA put on a first class Organization Day at Belton Lake, near Fort Hood. The weather was perfect, the food plentiful and delicious, and the athletic events well organized. Everybody had a great time, although a strong tension hung in the air among soldiers and family members alike: what would be the resolution of the Kuwait crisis? How would it affect us?

From August 7 to 9, I took my battery out on a "get acquainted" field training exercise (FTX). This FTX, which had been planned a month in advance, had two objectives: to shake the rust off of the outfit after one month of red cycle, and to acquaint the battery with its new commander in a tactical environment.

On August 8, during a lull in the training, one of my platoon sergeants turned on his portable FM radio to catch the news, and learned that the president had directed the 82nd Airborne Division, from Fort

Bragg, North Carolina, to deploy to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to deter further Iraqi aggression and, should deterrence fail, to defend the kingdom against an Iraqi ground attack. Since the 82nd Airborne Division was what we called a "light" division, it was air -- transportable, and had therefore already commenced its deployment. Moreover, the broadcaster explained, the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), from Fort Stewart, Georgia, had been put on alert; since its heavy, tracked vehicles could not be easily transported by air, it would have to move its equipment to Saudi with sealift, and would therefore take several weeks before it could be on the Saudi peninsula, combat ready.

When I was told the news, I felt a mixture of pride, sorrow, and envy: proud because my country was doing something about this outrage, sad because U.S. forces were once again in harm's way, and envious because I was not there with them.

One of the strangest things about a military professional is the emotional roller coaster that he rides regarding his chosen profession. The true military professional despises war, for war is an obscenity, a degradation of human life and values that he must endure, both mentally and physically. The true military professional prefers deterrence; the maintenance of a well - trained, well - equipped military force, whose capabilities and determination would frighten potential adversaries from committing an act contrary to our national interest.

However, if there must be a war, there is no other place that a military professional would rather be than involved in that war, making a tangible contribution to its successful prosecution. U.S. Service members swear an oath "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, both foreign and domestic," and take that oath very seriously. Military professionals bring to their jobs a great deal of pride and a profound sense of duty. During their nation's hour of need, they want to be on the battlefield, whatever the cost; to be watching from the sidelines brings a tremendous amount of guilt.

I was no exception to this rule. Eight months earlier, when Operation Just Cause, our invasion of Panama, was ongoing, I watched the campaign on television with a great deal of guilt. Even though it was a relatively small - scale operation, I could not help but feel left out, like a second stringer. When notified of the deployments of the 82nd and the 24th, these feelings came back in earnest. Once again, I thought, there is a crisis, and I am just standing on the sidelines, not making a contribution. Just like Panama.

After we returned from the field on August 9, I took two of my lieutenants to the Officer's Club for "happy hour." The wide screen television in the bar room was tuned to CNN, which was running a special news report entitled "Crisis in the Gulf". We tried discussing the field problem we had just finished, but the conversation kept drifting to the gulf crisis. The images of U.S. Army paratroopers exiting a C-141 aircraft at Dhahran air base, Saudi Arabia, haunted me.

The next day, I reported to the First Cavalry Division court room to sit on an elimination board for a Fort Hood soldier who was in the Bell County jail for off post misconduct. A form of "jury duty," this board was comprised of randomly selected, disinterested officers, whose task as to determine whether or not this soldier should be expelled from the service for his misconduct. After hearing testimony all morning, we broke for lunch at noon.

At the local snack bar, after getting my lunch, I noticed a colleague, the fire support officer for Task Force 1-8 Armor, sitting alone at a table, so I decided to join him. After exchanging greetings, he asked me if I had heard the news.

- "What news?" I asked him.
- "It's official", he replied. "We've been alerted. We're going."

My body burned with the adrenaline pumping through it. I will finally be able to make a real contribution, I thought. But, the more rational side of me thought, "what have I gotten myself into ?"

It was all I could do to get through the rest of the elimination board. After passing judgment on the soldier in question, I raced back to my unit, got a status report from my key subordinates, and went to

work, my mind racing a mile a minute.

After a careful estimate of the situation, I realized that we faced a daunting task indeed. My unit, along with the rest of the First Cavalry Division, had to shift gears from its European -- based wartime mission to whatever mission awaited it on the alien Arabian peninsula. According to the warning order, the "no later than" date for the First Cavalry Division to be completely deployed to Saudi Arabia was September 15. Given the amount of time it took to move vehicles by rail to the port of Houston, load them on ships, and sail to Saudi Arabia, I figured that we would have to be packed up and ready to go by August 21. To make matters more interesting, the Division Artillery (DIVARTY) Commander wanted to have a DIVARTY FTX from August 13 to 17, to give every howitzer crew the opportunity to live - fire their howitzers prior to deployment, and to practice massing the fires of the entire DIVARTY. Consequently, we promptly went to a 16 hour a day, 7 days a week work schedule.

Initially, the priority went to acquiring "modified table of organization and equipment" (MTOE) property that the battery was short. Since most of the battery's "go to war" equipment was in Germany - based POMCUS sets, the equipment on hand at Fort Hood did not include critical items such as PVS - 7 night vision goggles, sufficient quantities of Vinson speech - secure devices, or Zone 2 (desert) clothing items. These shortages were immediately identified and put on order.

The vehicles we had at Fort Hood were not the ones we were planning to go to war with; our "go to war" vehicles were prepositioned in Europe. Consequently, we had never expected to actually fight with the vehicles on hand. It was universally understood that they were for "training use only". Nonetheless, we had kept them reasonably well maintained, partly out of pride, and partly due to the fact that it was tough to conduct meaningful training when one's equipment kept breaking down. Still, our vehicles required a good deal of preventive maintenance and services prior to deployment.

From August 13 to 17, we participated in what turned out to be an extremely productive DIVARTY FTX. In addition to practicing both battalion and DIVARTY operations, we calibrated all eight of our howitzers.

The next week was reserved primarily for direct fire ranges. the 1st Battalion, 20th Field Artillery, an inactivating M110 eight inch battalion, ran a variety of ranges for deploying DIVARTY units, to include the following weapons systems: the M16A2 rifle, the M60 7.62 mm machine gun, and the Browning M2 .50 caliber machine gun. The intent was to test fire all crew -- served weapons, and to zero every deploying soldier on his M16A2 rifle. These ranges, particularly the machine gun ranges, were indispensable in that they exposed some serious maintenance problems on some weapons, which were promptly corrected.

My battery in particular had a nightmarish situation with crew -- served weapons. At the first machine gun range, only two out of my 19 M2s, and only half of my M60s, fired. After receiving some "single vector" guidance from my boss, the battalion commander, I decided that I needed to get this deplorable situation fixed quickly, and turned two individuals loose on the problem: my Arms Room officer, and my armorer. Both individuals were new to the job, and untrained.

As it turned out, they did an exemplary job. One week's worth of "on the job training" and "burning the midnight oil," in addition to a little help from direct support level small arms mechanics, was all that was needed to get our weapons firing. The next time we went out to the range, 18 of 19 M2s and all of our M60s fired flawlessly.

At this time, I figured that we would start rail loading our equipment to Houston, in order to meet the September 15 deadline to be in Saudi Arabia. However, sealift problems made that deadline unattainable, and it was changed to October 15. By this time, we had been on alert for two weeks, and the prospect of six more weeks at Fort Hood waiting to deploy did not particularly appeal to me. I was becoming very impatient, and wanted to get to Saudi Arabia as soon as possible. One of my biggest fears was that a war would start before we were on the ground in Saudi. The last thing I wanted to do was to try to enter a hostile theater of operations.

Meanwhile, as long as we had the time, we put it to good use. The next priority was to paint all vehicles sand. This was a mammoth task that was centralized at the installation level, and run by the Fort Hood Directorate of Logistics (DOL). DOL conducted 24 hour operations, and insisted on having no lag time between units. Therefore, although there was an order of march, there was not a schedule *per se*; once a unit had only a few more vehicles left to go through the paint booth, it alerted the next unit; in C Battery's case, this phone call came at 2300 hours on a Friday night. It took approximately 13 hours to paint all of the battery's vehicles and trailers.

Other pre -- deployment activities included individual training in critical deployment tasks. The First Cavalry Division Commanding General directed that all division soldiers train and test on a list of critical common soldier tasks, most of which were NBC (nuclear - biological - chemical) related, due to Iraq's much heralded NBC offensive capability. Additionally, we spent several hours each day in MOPP (mission oriented protective posture) level 4, our highest level of chemical protection, to acclimate ourselves to wearing heavy NBC gear in hot weather.

Physical Fitness Training also intensified, to ensure that soldiers would be in peak physical condition once they deployed. In addition to our normal daily regimen of calisthenics and distance runs, we added activities such as hand to hand combat, bayonet training, and forced marches in full combat gear. We even pulled a PAC 75 howitzer two and a half miles during a brigade run.

Of course, we underwent a complete personnel POM (preparation for overseas movement). The POM, conducted in Blackjack Gymnasium, included immunizations against a barrage of diseases indigenous to Southwest Asia. It also allowed soldiers to update their "201" personnel files and prepare their Last Will and Testament, which was a sobering experience for most soldiers. The POM process also screened medical and dental records to identify soldiers who had a condition that, uncorrected, would render them "non -- deployable." The various Fort Hood medical and dental clinics worked around the clock to treat soldiers' non - deployable conditions.

Toward the end of September, we finally shipped our equipment. Since nobody was sure what we would face at the other end, our vehicles were combat - loaded, to include a full ammunition basic load. Our tracked vehicles were loaded onto flat bed rail cars at the Fort Hood rail head, and shipped to the ports of Houston and Galveston for sea movement to Saudi Arabia. After an extensive technical inspection, the battery's wheeled vehicle fleet road marched 350 miles from Fort Hood to the port of Houston. Everywhere along the route of march was evident the breadth and depth of public support for Operation Desert Shield; on virtually every overpass, in every town, and at every rest stop, Americans waved flags, cheered, and offered their support for the soldiers. This was only the beginning of the overwhelming public support that soldiers of C Battery would witness over and over again throughout the deployment.

After the vehicles and equipment were shipped, all that was left to do was to wait for the "airflow". The division's airflow plan involved flying soldiers to Dhahran Air Base, Saudi Arabia, several days prior to the arrival of the ship bearing their equipment. This allowed soldiers several days to acclimatize themselves to Saudi Arabia's oppressive heat, while at the same time ensuring that there were sufficient soldiers in country to down load their ship as soon as it arrived, without delay. The plan also allowed for TAT (To accompany troops) cargo, mainly small arms ammunition and chemical protective suits, to allow soldiers to fight and survive, if necessary, as soon as they disembarked.

Since we still had about ten days before flying to Saudi, we used the time to close down our billets and motor pool, since it was anticipated that they would be used while we were gone to house mobilized National Guard and reserve troops. We consolidated all stay back equipment, and locked them into storage connexes. Single soldiers living off -- post cleared out their apartments, and put their private property into storage.

Off -- line, we were told to expect a six to twelve month deployment. There was even some speculation that this would become a permanent deployment; some officers privately expected a permanent presence of U.S. forces in the Middle East, and anticipated that the First Cavalry Division would not return to Fort Hood, but would remain in Saudi Arabia. Assuming that there was no war, I expected one of two things: either a six month deployment followed by a unit rotation, or a one year tour, after which I would be

rotated back to the States and replaced by an individual replacement.

The big day came on October 9. At 1800 hours, we were bused to Abrams Gym, where we underwent the manifest process, which included checking identification cards, dog tags, and ensuring that the aircraft manifest was 100 percent correct. Many family members were present, since this was the last time that they would see their loved ones for a long time. The excitement of the impending deployment was tempered by the many tearful good-byes, which put even the single soldiers in a very somber mood.

After the manifest process, we were bused to Robert Gray Army Airfield. There, we were given a safety briefing and one more final headcount, and then marched across the tarmac to the waiting aircraft, while the division band played "Charge" and "Garry Owen". On October 10, at 0200 hours, after being on alert for exactly two months, I boarded a World Airways DC-10. I was finally on my way to Saudi Arabia.

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"Welcome to Saudi Arabia"

In the peacetime U.S. Army, things are relatively predictable. For example, if an outfit is going on a training deployment to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, or the Grafenwoehr Training Area in Germany, that unit knows exactly how long it will be gone from its home station. The soldiers can count on having decent billeting, latrines, and rations. Generally speaking, that unit knows what's going on, and what's going to happen.

When I boarded the commercial airliner that had been chartered to take us to Saudi Arabia, I really had no idea what to expect on the other end. All I had were fantasies, romantic images of the American soldier, the "knight in shining armor", deployed overseas to defend freedom. I was in for a rude awakening.

What I did learn was to "expect the unexpected." The process of deploying a military unit, with all of its personnel and equipment, 8000 miles to a harsh environment to accomplish a contingency mission is, at best, a tough, uncertain business. The problems that I had to contend with as a battery commander were many. Accounting for and taking care of people and property, acclimating the unit to a rough climate, and maintaining discipline and control did not make any easier the job of downloading ships and airplanes, fixing broke equipment, reconfiguring load plans, and moving out into the desert.

I was the planeload commander of the flight that took us to Saudi Arabia. I was responsible for ensuring that all of the personnel and equipment manifested for that flight got on the plane at Robert Gray Army Airfield at Fort Hood, got off the plane at the Dhahran Air Base in Saudi Arabia, and did not get lost at any of the stops in between. I was not, however, the senior man on the flight; our battalion executive officer, a Major, was accompanying us. That meant that I was not in "command" in the classical sense of the word. I did, however, have a very important mission that, if screwed up, would cause an abrupt and unfavorable termination of my military career.

The passengers on this flight included the 2nd platoon of my battery, the entire Service Battery of 3-82 FA, and an assortment of other soldiers from other units who, for one reason or another, did not deploy with their own units. This situation was not of my choosing, nor was it of my liking. I would have preferred to have taken my entire outfit, insofar as maintaining unit integrity allows a commander to maintain positive control over the unit for which he is responsible. However, my 1st platoon, along with my first sergeant, had been tasked to "close up shop" for the battalion, and would thus have to be the last soldiers in the battalion to leave Fort Hood.

After roughly nine hours of flying, we landed in Paris, France for fuel. From there, we proceeded to Cairo, Egypt for another fuel stop. At about 2100 hours local time, after the DC-10 had landed and was taxi-ing to its designated terminal, the smooth flow of the airliner rolling down the tarmac was suddenly interrupted by a rough grinding to a halt. Looking out the window, I noticed that the plane was straddling a row of runway lights, one of which appeared to be broken. On one side was asphalt, and on the other side was sand. The airliner had skidded off the runway.

The Egyptians went ballistic upon hearing that the plane that had run off the tarmac contained about 200 armed U.S. soldiers. They immediately sent a ground crew to investigate. When I observed this rather motley looking group of men tampering with the damaged nose gear, I casually suggested that some, if not all, of the ground crew might be terrorists, and, if that were the case, we were sitting ducks. This observation, which greatly distressed some of the younger soldiers and flight crew members, drew a harsh reprimand from my battalion XO.

Soon thereafter, an Egyptian Army captain, accompanied by an Egyptian civilian and several buses, boarded the plane. Obviously afraid of adverse publicity and terrorism, the two Egyptians were both nervous and caustic. The chain-smoking Egyptian captain gave an order in Arabic, which the civilian translated as meaning "get off the plane, get on the buses, and leave your weapons behind." At the insistence of my battalion XO and me, we were permitted to leave behind a few soldiers to guard the weapons. Once we boarded the buses, we were driven to a remote corner of the airport, where we were told to remain on the buses.

We immediately ran into a problem of a biological nature. Since we had assumed that we would have access to latrine facilities (if nothing else those on the aircraft), we had consumed large quantities of beverages: water, coffee, and soda. Consequently, many soldiers had to urinate badly. When I suggested this to the Egyptian captain through an interpreter, he adamantly told me no, and to get back on the bus. Fortunately, many soldiers had brought bottled water with them; those plastic bottles were summarily pressed into service as field-expedient urinals.

Finally, the airline decided that it would not be able to repair the damaged airliner in a timely manner. Therefore, at the considerable urging of the irate Egyptians, who were quite eager to rid themselves of the problem they had inherited, the airline station manager diverted another DC-10. Once this plane had taxied alongside the disabled one, the Egyptians instructed us to provide a detail to download the old aircraft and upload the new one.

It took until midnight to accomplish this task. Once we got the "thumbs up," the buses took us to the new aircraft. Since I only had one copy of the flight manifest, and since I had to ensure that all soldiers were accounted for, I instructed all soldiers to enter the aircraft at the forward cabin door. I posted myself there, and as soldiers boarded, I checked their names off the list. The last thing I wanted to do was accidentally leave a soldier behind in Cairo.

The Egyptian captain decided that I was taking entirely too long to get all of my soldiers on the aircraft. Therefore, he went up to the line of soldiers waiting to be manifested onto the plane, broke the line in two, and demanded that the second group of soldiers board through the rear cabin door. They dutifully complied. One can only imagine my chagrin when I observed un-manifested soldiers boarding the aircraft by the dozen. My personnel accountability efforts were shot to hell.

After that fiasco, I checked off as many names as I could. Once everybody was on the plane, I called off the names that had not been checked off on my manifest over the plane's intercom system. Those soldiers proceeded to the front cabin to show me that they were in fact present. Once I was sure that we had everybody, we left Cairo and proceeded on to Dhahran.

On 11 October 1990, at about 0700 hours local time, we touched down in Dhahran. When I exited the air-conditioned plane, I immediately felt a powerful blast of heat and humidity. We were met by APOD (aerial port of debarkation) personnel, who fell us into a formation, briefed us on what was going on, and marched us to a huge white Bedouin tent, where we were told to wait while our plane was being downloaded. We were also reminded to drink plenty of water, so that we would not become heat

casualties; next to the waiting tent was literally a mountain of bottled water provided for that purpose.

After a one hour wait, Saudi buses and tractor-trailers arrived to take us and our equipment to the seaport. We loaded our duffel bags, rucksacks, NBC suits, and ammunition on the tractor-trailers, and crammed onto the buses. The Saudi buses, in accordance with Islamic law, had separate compartments in the back for women. I could not help but wonder what NOW (National Organization for Women) would think of this, if they could see this.

The buses took us to a little piece of hell called the King Abdul Aziz Port Authority. Actually, Saudi Arabia has some of the best, most modern port facilities in the world. However, I can sincerely state that the week I spent at that godforsaken berth was the worst week of my life. The living conditions we were subjected to at the Port Authority would cause riots in U.S. prisons.

After weaving through a maze of concrete security barriers and manned checkpoints designed to stop even the most powerful truck bombs, the buses deposited us at Warehouse 14, our new home. This warehouse billeted about 5000 soldiers. Each soldier had a living space of ten feet by four feet: enough space for a cot and duffel bags. Sanitation facilities were primitive; our latrine and shower facilities were prefabricated monstrosities that were located a mile away from the warehouse. This was necessary to keep their overflow of water, urine and other bodily fluids from shorting out the huge, orange, electric cranes that were used to offload the ships.

There was a urinal located in the adjacent warehouse. However, since we were drinking about four gallons of bottled water a day to avoid becoming heat casualties, there usually was a long line. Even then, it was not worth the wait. Since the plumbing had long since clogged up, there was usually about 2 inches of urine on the floor that had to be waded through to get to the urinal. Personally, I would normally just make the one mile hike to the prefab latrines.

For breakfast and dinner, we normally got hot "T-rations" served by a consolidated mess hall located in a nearby warehouse. T-rations are field rations that consist of various entrees vacuum-packed into large tin containers that are immersed into boiling water to heat the contents, then opened and served. We were served supplemental rations, usually fresh fruits and vegetables purchased off of the local economy. Unfortunately, these supplements normally gave soldiers dysentery. Since this *ad hoc* mess hall was serving 10,000 soldiers, the lines for chow averaged about one kilometer in length. Located on the berth was also a chicken stand run by a couple of Palestinian expatriates. Their food was fairly tasty, if one could handle the inevitable dysentery. For lunch, we were issued MREs (Meals, Ready to Eat), which were consumed cold.

The day we arrived, I attempted to block off a corner of the warehouse for 3-82 FA in a feeble attempt to maintain unit integrity. Despite my best efforts, this was impossible. The rule was "first come, first served." We had to satisfy ourselves with taking the first empty cots that were available, as units vacated their warehouse space and deployed to the desert. In fact, we were very lucky to have received cots for all of our soldiers that first day. The end result was that my soldiers were spread all over the place; command and control was very difficult. We solved that problem by conducting numerous formations during the course of the day.

Obviously, in a situation like this, both morale and discipline suffered. Since we had arrived almost a week prior to our ship-loaded equipment arriving (in order to acclimate the soldiers to the climate before doing any heavy work), our soldiers had nothing to do except being hot and miserable. We tried to fill the time by conducting physical fitness and individual skills training, as well as making our soldiers clean and reclean their rifles and protective masks. We also kept the warehouses, which were quickly turning into garbage dumps, clean. This helped a little, but I still sensed big morale problems developing.

One controversial subject that adversely affected discipline was the practice of billeting female soldiers in the same warehouses as male soldiers. In retrospect, this was unavoidable, but it still led to problems. Since there was no privacy in the warehouse with the exception of a tiny changing room in one corner, frustrated female soldiers eventually would just change clothes right at their cots, in plain view of

hundreds of male soldiers. Fraternization was fairly widespread; soldiers would find some pier somewhere to have sex at night. There were even some cases of prostitution reported.

The biggest boost to morale was, without a doubt, mail call. The Army very astutely kept the mail flow going. Letters from home (which were just beginning to arrive), as well as newspapers, such as the *Stars and Stripes*, and the *Arab News* and the *Saudi Gazette* (two local English language dailies), lifted soldiers' spirits immeasurably. Even soldiers who were not receiving mail from home benefited from "Any Servicemember" letters; the volume of such letters was simply phenomenal.

In summary, the first several days in Saudi Arabia were about as unpleasant an experience as I could imagine. Everything about living at the port was hard. Simple, everyday things that we had taken for granted were major undertakings here. Life resembled that of a refugee camp more than a military garrison.

At mid-morning on 15 October, we received word that our ship had arrived, and needed to be downloaded. Unfortunately, it arrived at a different berth, about six miles away from Warehouse 14. Since all of our tactical vehicles were on the ship, we had to rely on scarce shuttle buses to rotate our people from the warehouse to the ship. In retrospect, it would have been quicker to have walked the distance. Nonetheless, we had sufficient personnel at the ship by 1300 hours to download it. By 2300 hours that day, we had completely downloaded the entire ship, and all vehicles were placed in a fenced-off marshaling area. Once a sufficient number of Heavy Equipment Transport (HET) tractor-trailers became available to transport every tracked vehicle in the battalion, the unit would deploy to its assembly area in the desert.

When an Army unit makes an administrative land movement over long distances, it usually moves its tracked vehicles by rail, or, less commonly, HETs, to save wear and tear on the expensive, breakdown-prone, hard to maintain tracked vehicles. The U.S. Army, which had focused for several decades to fight a Soviet attack of Western Europe, was much more accustomed to rail-loading than HET-loading, since European countries had such a well-developed rail infrastructure. Consequently, when Operation Desert Shield commenced, the U.S. Army had only about 500 HETs in its inventory.

Unfortunately, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not endowed with such a well-developed rail system. Consequently, in order to move the thousands of tracked vehicles from the port to desert assembly areas, we had to contract for local Saudi HETs. These local HETs, along with their indigenous drivers, were often unreliable and unsafe.

The biggest problems were the trucks themselves. Overused and under-maintained, they often had such obvious problems as balding tires, faulty brakes, inoperable lights, and leaky engines and transmissions. The drivers were not much better. Most of them were not Saudis; rather, they were "expat" workers, usually Palestinians, Jordanians, Pakistanis, Indians, and Bangladeshis. Most of them did not speak English; some did not even speak Arabic. I remember one driver who spoke nothing but Urdu. By the way they drove, "safety" was obviously not a word in their vocabulary, regardless of their native tongue.

By the afternoon of 18 October, we finally got enough HETs to deploy our entire battalion to Assembly Area Horse, located about 120 miles west-northwest of the port. We uploaded quickly, and departed the port at 1800 hours. I was never so happy to leave a place as I was to leave the King Abdul Aziz Port Authority.

I was the trail vehicle of the entire convoy, and, as such, was responsible for policing up stragglers. The conduct of the civilian HET drivers infuriated me. They exhibited no march discipline; they merely pulled over to the side of the road whenever they wanted to. Normally, they would stop at one of the many rest stops that peppered the Dammam-Riyadh freeway. One driver even stopped to take a nap. At my strenuous insistence, he begrudgingly got his truck back on the road.

After a three and a half hour trip, we pulled the convoy off the road, and downloaded our tracks for the final 3 kilometer march to the AA Horse staging area. All of the HETs, about 120 of them, became stuck in the soft, fine sand of the desert; we spent the rest of the night towing them out with our recovery

vehicles. Once we arrived at the staging area, we spent 3 days combat loading our vehicles before the final move to our main assembly area.

Our move to the assembly area, about 4 miles due west, took about 6 hours. All of our old M35A2 2 1/2 ton trucks became stuck in the sand about 3 or 4 times, and had to be towed out. After having been in country not quite two weeks, I was beginning to understand that there was nothing romantic or exotic about this: this was just plain hard. "Welcome to Saudi Arabia," I thought cynically.

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AA Horse

Living in the desert is not easy. One of the first lessons we learned in Assembly Area Horse was that the desert does not easily support human life. We learned that to survive in the harsh desert environment, we had to put as much effort as we could into life support, without sacrificing security. In addition to being a survival issue, life support was also a morale issue. Realizing that soldier morale would quickly plummet if we did not establish sound life support systems, that became our number one priority upon occupying AA Horse. To establish the right attitude, we stopped referring to AA Horse as an assembly area, and started calling it a "life support area", or LSA.

Coming from a temperate climate, it took us a while to internalize what we were up against in the desert. The desert exposes one to climactic extremes; obviously hot during the day, the desert is nonetheless cold at night, since the sand does not easily retain the sun's heat. Indigenous sources of water are very rare; wells are few and far between, and most contain water that is not potable by Western standards, unless treated with foul tasting chlorine or metallic tasting iodine. Food in the desert is largely unavailable, unless one's palate can handle insects, rats, and lizards. Shelter from the sun, sandstorms, and rain during the winter months, must be imported. Wood to build things must be imported. What life the desert does support is often hostile and/or repugnant: scorpions, poisonous snakes, kangaroo rats, and dung beetles, to name a few.

However, the Bedouins had been living in the desert for centuries, and we resolved that we could do it too. Therefore, we spent our first two weeks in AA Horse establishing a first class LSA. The first thing we did was to establish a hierarchy of needs: water, food, shelter, field sanitation/hygiene, security, and recreation. Then, we structured and prioritized our logistics systems to import all of our life support.

Water: We imported tractor trailer trucks full of bottled drinking water that had been donated to the U.S. Army by the Saudi Government. We used tanker trucks to bring in well water for personal hygiene, laundry, and emergency drinking. This water was normally transported from its source to the 2nd Brigade support area; from there, it was a unit responsibility to pick it up and bring it back to the individual life support areas using organic transportation.

Given the heat, the sand, the hard work, and the grime, our soldiers consumed a tremendous amount of both bottled and well water daily. On an average day, we had to make two or three water runs to keep up with the consumption. Due to our wheeled vehicle mobility problem, we had to use ammunition HEMMTs to ship water.

Food: Food, in addition to being a survival issue, was also a morale issue. For a U.S. Army unit in the

field, the staple was the "Meals, Ready to Eat," or MRE. Pre-packaged and easy to transport, soldiers could always count on having something to eat. However, eating cold MREs got old very quickly. Therefore, our leadership challenge was to provide as many hot meals as possible.

When it came to hot meals, we had several options. The first, and clearly most desirable, was to cook and serve "A-rations." A-rations are the Army's version of real food. The only problem was that these rations required refrigeration. Eventually, we received a refrigerated "reefer" van, but, initially, A -- rations were few and far between.

The next option for hot meals was "T -- rations." These rations are pre-cooked and hermetically sealed in tin containers, thereby negating the need for refrigerated storage. They are easy to prepare; all one has to do is immerse the tins in boiling water for a few minutes to heat up the food inside. Unfortunately, the Army's relatively meager stockpile of T - rations was very quickly consumed during the initial deployment, causing us to have to live off of commercially procured rations, such as "Lunch Buckets", as well as meal supplements purchased off of the Saudi economy, such as Pepsi's, fruit, pastries, and vegetables.

Shelter: If the food situation was not simple, the shelter situation was: everybody lived in tents. We had two types of tents: standard U.S. Army canvas "General Purpose tents" (three sizes: small, medium, and large), and white cotton Bedouin tents. Unfortunately, this created two standards of living: bad, and worse. Soldiers staying in G.P. Mediums could use stoves to help ward off the cold at night. They could also have candles and electric drop lights; and could smoke in them. Soldiers staying in Bedouins could do none of the above, since Bedouins were highly flammable, and would go up in flames at the slightest spark, putting the lives of soldiers at risk. Regardless of what type of tent they lived in, every soldier slept on cots to protect against scorpions and snakes (Early in the deployment, before cots became readily available, soldiers simply slept on the ground. We found out early on that this was a "No Go," after several soldiers were bitten by snakes and scorpions).

Field sanitation: Every soldier who has spent an extended period of time in the field knows that field sanitation (or, more specifically, a lack thereof) is a potential "war stopper." Military history is replete with examples of combat units being ravaged by diseases spread through poor soldier hygiene, poor pest and rodent control, and improper disposing of human feces. Therefore, we made field sanitation a priority. The Army gave us locally purchased wooden prefab showers and "porta-potty"-- type latrines. We improved upon the showers by building them up "locker room style" with wood, and by heating the water with standard U.S. Army issue immersion heaters. This greatly encouraged soldiers to take showers. As anybody who has spent time in the field knows, it is an absolutely miserable experience to take a cold shower on a cold night out in the field. We improved upon the "shitters", as they were affectionately called, by enclosing them with screens to keep the critters out, spraying insecticide to keep away flies, and spreading diesel to keep scorpions out and to reduce the stench of human feces. Naturally, the 55 gallon drum half barrels that contained the human refuse were burned daily, as were the trash pits. Everything we took for granted in "the world" was hard here.

Security: Apart from a possible Iraqi invasion, there was also an active terrorist threat. We used firing battery howitzers to man the battalion perimeter. OPs (observation posts) ringed behind them on the high ground (rocky mounds) to provide early warning of any impending threat. Each battery maintained a roving guard patrol to reinforce any penetration of the perimeter. The battalion reaction force backed up the battery reaction forces. Battalion reaction force duty rotated from battery to battery.

Recreation: Sitting in the Saudi desert with no end in sight caused morale to go south very quickly, and we did what we could to lift it. We continued to train very hard, of course, so we did not have much free time, but what free time we did have had to be filled with what few recreational activities were available. Unfortunately, the two favorite recreational activities for soldiers were not an option. No alcohol consumption whatsoever was permitted. There were no women around, since we were an all male unit.

We played lots of sports (mostly football and volleyball) to pass the time and work off some of that unused energy. Of course, this occasionally caused the potential readiness problem of sports injuries. Other recreational activities included:

- *Card playing* (probably the third favorite soldier recreational activity).
- *Watching movies* on the TV and VCR we had set up in our recreation tent.
- *The DIVARTY (Division Artillery) and 2nd Brigade PX trucks*, which would come around every couple of weeks.
- *"Shield 107,"* the AFRTS (Armed Forces Radio and Television Service) radio station set up in Dhahran.
- *The DSA (Division Support Area) "Soldier's Mall,"* that had a PX truck, Phone center (graciously donated by AT&T), Arab gift shop, and a "Wolfburger" hamburger stand.
- *Mail Call:* We continued to receive overwhelming support from the home front, to include packages and letters from home, as well as tons of "Any Servicemember" mail.
- *Newspapers,* to include Stars & Stripes, Arab News and Saudi Gazette (two local English language dailies), USA Today, and Newsweek.
- Additionally, there were two *Rest & Recreation areas* in theater: "Half Moon Bay," a Saudi resort located near the Dammam/Dhahran/Al Khobar metropolitan area, and a Canard Cruise ship docked at the little Persian Gulf island of Bahrain. Unfortunately, the vast majority of combat troops out on the desert floor never got a chance to go to either of those R&R sites; U.S. troops frequenting those sites were mostly rear echelon troops stationed in or near big cities.

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The Line in the Sand

In late October 1990, after having established our life support area in AA Horse, we settled into a routine of training for war while at the same time keeping a watchful eye north for any possible Iraqi military activity. At the time, we had no idea how the crisis would play out; for the indefinite future, we were still focused on stopping a possible Iraqi attack of Saudi Arabia. Since we had plenty of time on our hands, we started an intensive training cycle to prepare ourselves for whatever lay ahead. This had the added benefit of keeping soldiers busy; morale was already beginning to sag after only a few weeks in the desert, and training gave soldiers something substantive to do.

The mission of the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) during the early stages of Operation Desert Shield was to defend Saudi Arabia against Iraqi attack. 18th Airborne Corps (from Fort Bragg, North Carolina), USCENTCOM's major U.S. Army subordinate command, had the mission to defend in depth to prevent Iraqi seizure of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. Initially, the 18th Airborne Corps consisted of 4 divisions: the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) from Fort Campbell, KY, which was the corps covering force along the Tapline road; the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) from Fort Stewart, Georgia, the main defensive force, to our front; the 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to our right flank, protecting port facilities and oil fields; and my division, the First Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, TX, the corps counterattack force. With that mission, it was clear that the 1st Cav's operations would be oriented toward the offensive. My unit, 3-82 FA, was the Direct Support Field Artillery Battalion for the 1st Cav's 2nd Brigade, nicknamed the *Blackjack Brigade*.

Before I describe our tactical operations and training, I must first give a brief description of the role of

the Field Artillery. We shoot what is called indirect fire. In other words, our howitzers have no direct line of sight with the target. We shoot over terrain and obstacles at targets we cannot see from the guns. A forward observer sends the target location in Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) grid coordinates to the fire direction center (FDC), which, based on its knowledge of the firing battery location, computes the direction and the range to the target. Based on the ballistic trajectory of round, the FDC derives tube elevation, charge, and fuze setting from the range to the target. The FDC then sends this data, known as "fire commands," to the howitzers. Fire commands are composed of ammunition type, "deflection" (direction), elevation, charge, and fuze setting. The howitzer crews then orient their tubes on this data, load the howitzers, and fire on command. To be accurate, the field artillery must meet certain requirements: accurate target location, accurate location of the guns, meteorological data (to compensate for the effect of the weather on the projectiles while in flight), and knowledge of ammunition characteristics (such as projectile weight, propellant temperature, and muzzle velocity). Therefore, the Field Artillery must be able to "shoot, move, and communicate" to provide effective artillery support. Normally, it takes a battery about 8-15 minutes to get ready to fire from the march.

We encountered special tactical problems in the Saudi desert which impacted on our tactical operations and training. Arguably the most significant problem was land navigation. Navigating in the desert, with its lack of easily identifiable terrain features on the ground, is never an easy proposition. Throw a lack of high quality maps into the equation, and you have a real problem getting from point A to point B. The Army gave us navigation aids to mitigate our map reading problems somewhat. Unfortunately, these navigation aids were in short supply. These navigation aids included LORAN receivers, GPS receivers, and of course, our PADS (Position and azimuth determining system).

Another problem we had was that our wheeled vehicles (minus the HEMMT) had greatly restricted mobility in the Saudi desert. Moreover, fine desert sand got into vehicle lubricants (road wheels, fan towers, turret hydraulic systems) and tore up parts, which caused significant vehicle maintenance problems. This was compounded by a theater wide shortage of spare parts. Most of the sea and airlift at this stage of the deployment was devoted to getting soldiers and ammunition in country, which contributed greatly to the repair parts shortage.

Our training plan was designed to hone basic artillery skills in building block fashion, while at the same time training to overcome desert-specific problems, and maintaining equipment; the bottom-line rule was to maintain 90% Operational Readiness rate at all costs. If more than 10 percent of our vehicles broke, we stopped training and focused on fixing vehicles. Since we had just come off of a red cycle when alerted, we were not ready for war. Thank God for the focused, concentrated time we had to train during Desert Shield. If the Iraqis had crossed the border in October or November 1990, we would have been in big trouble. We used to make jokes about the "Dhahran perimeter," reminiscent of the Pusan perimeter during the early stages of the Korean war. The highlights of our training plan included:

- Artillery Training Plan: Crew drill within the perimeter; and platoon and battery training within our "maneuver box."
 - Maintenance training.
 - Survey training and navigation training (hasty survey techniques, LORAN and GPS navigation).
 - Wheeled vehicle driver's training (how to drive in the Saudi sand).
 - Sustainment training on critical survivability tasks such as NBC (Nuclear-Biological-Chemical defense skills) and first aid.
 - Special emphasis on night training; night navigation was particularly tough. With our night vision technology (NVGs, thermal sights, etc.), we felt we could win a night war against the less sophisticated Iraqis.
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Uncertainty was psychological warfare. After one month in the desert, morale was already beginning to sag, because nobody could tell us how long we would be there and what we would do (we learned not to

underestimate the importance of predictability). What kept a lot of soldiers going was the possibility of a six month rotation with other units. That was certainly not definite, though. Little did we know at the end of October 1990 that the equation was about to change significantly.

On November 4, 1990, Secretary of State Baker visited us. We had a Division formation near "Pegasus TOC," the First Cavalry Division main tactical operations center. All battery leadership, plus about 15 soldiers from each battery, attended. Baker gave a speech, sounding very morose and somewhat downhearted. He thanked us for our sacrifices, and said we were the best. In other words, he gave the typical VIP speech. Afterwards, he tramped the line. I do not think he was too happy with the reception he got from some of the testy soldiers he encountered.

On November 8, 1990 came the announcement of the second wave of deployments. Many soldiers were stunned. Those were the troops who were supposed to rotate with us. Now we knew our choice was one of two things: stay here for a long, long, time, or dig those guys out of Kuwait in a brutal war. A hell of a choice! Morale became even lower, and since morale of my troops was my responsibility, I knew that I faced a tough leadership challenge.

We solved the problem (sort of) by picking up the training pace. The benefits of hard training extended beyond the obvious gain of becoming more proficient: it also gave the soldiers something to do, and kept them from moping around and worrying about their lot in life. Specifically, we conducted a live fire exercise at Ali range from November 17-19, 1990. Ali range was the 18th Airborne Corps range 30 miles east of AA Horse. It was a good training exercise in two ways: first, things start to come together in a training and teamwork sense, and, secondly, morale picked up again.

Peter Jennings and Roone Artledge visited us several days before Thanksgiving. Jennings had been in Baghdad interviewing Saddam Hussein, and decided to swing by Saudi Arabia to visit a few U.S. Army tactical units and shoot some footage for the evening news. Jennings was somewhat aloof, formal, and stuffy. Roone Artledge, on the other hand, was extremely outgoing and friendly, walking around, shaking hands, and chatting with soldiers. He looked to me like somebody running for political office. Nevertheless, their visit gave our morale a real shot in the arm; soldiers on deployment look forward to visits like that because it's something new, something fresh, and it breaks up the harsh, dull routine. Contrary to popular belief, soldiers generally enjoy meeting the press. It's usually the chain of command that doesn't relish it; journalists are pros at getting people to open up and talk, and, once a soldier gets "on a roll", it's possible that classified and/or sensitive information might leak out and end up on the front page of the *Washington Post*. In any event, we gave Jennings a Desert Shield "I was there" T-shirt and a desert camouflage uniform shirt with Jennings name tag sewn on (I had a soldier named Jennings who donated the name tag, I donated the shirt, and one of my lieutenants sewed the name tag on.).

Morale took a nose dive on Thanksgiving Day, 1990: this is a phenomenon I call "Holiday Blues". Soldiers on deployment always become depressed during the holidays, probably because the holidays cause soldiers to think about and miss their family and loved ones even more than they usually do. The Army's solution is to throw food at the problem. It is a tradition in the U.S. Army to get "real" food out to soldiers in the field during major holidays at all costs. In our case, they flew in a fresh turkey dinner, and the cooks spent 12 full hours preparing it in their MKTs (Mobile Kitchen Trailer). I was duly impressed at the trouble the Army went through to take care of us.

When the end of the month approached, morale was at an all time low. All we could do was continue to train, wonder what would happen, and hope and pray for the best, but expect the worst. It has been said that an active imagination is a soldier's worst enemy: when you don't know what's going to happen to you, you start imagining the worst, and that simply feeds your fear.

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"Holiday Blues"

By the end of November, the weather was getting bitterly cold, and the days were getting shorter. "Shamals" (northerly Arabian peninsula winds) began blowing sandstorms from the north and adding to the wind chill. The guard force at night caught hell from the cold. Soldiers who lived in GP tents could keep warm at night with pot belly stoves; soldiers in Bedouin tents, though, just had to "suck it up." Bedouin tents were too flammable to allow stoves therein. We were issued thermal underwear, something most soldiers had not thought to bring to Saudi Arabia. "Who had thought that it could get so damned cold in the desert," many soldiers wondered.

On November 30, 1990, the UN Security Council approved the use of force after January 15, 1991 to expel Iraq from Kuwait. The intent was to give diplomacy and sanctions until January 15 to solve the problem, after which the coalition would be "authorized" (at least in the eyes of the UN) to liberate Kuwait by force. This gave us a date to focus on, which improved morale by taking some of the uncertainty away. With VII Corps' deployments and the UN resolution, we were able to deduce that we would eventually attack to liberate Kuwait. This was reinforced by the fact that our higher headquarters directed that we change our training focus to concentrate on offensive, rather than defensive, operations. People started saying that "the road home leads through Kuwait."

In early December, Saddam Hussein started test firing SCUDs in the Western Iraqi desert (presumably to make sure they actually worked). Of course, CENTCOM's target acquisition systems would pick them up when they left their launch platforms, and send out a "SCUD alert." Whenever we received SCUD alerts, we expanded our perimeter and dispersed our vehicles into the surrounding desert to increase our survivability. At first, this was something new and exciting, but it started happening with a great deal of regularity, and usually at night. Of course, at this point, the SCUDs were not being shot at Saudi Arabia (they were only being test fired in Iraq), but, to be on the safe side, we felt it prudent to make survivability moves. Nevertheless, it did not take long for SCUD alerts to become synonymous with the expression "pain in the ass."

By mid December, we had received a "warning order" to move to King Khalid Military City (KKMC) to "prepare for future operations." KKMC is a Saudi military base located approximately 40 kilometers southwest of the Saudi city of Hafar Al Batin, near the tri-border area (where Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia meet) and the Neutral zone. KKMC was nicknamed "Emerald City" after the famed secret city in the *Wizard of Oz*, because the security-conscious Saudis would not allow KKMC to be publicly identified in any way. We were excited about moving north simply because it was something new and different. Unfortunately, the move was postponed when President Bush offered to have Secretary of State Baker meet the Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz to explore peace. The concern was that the First Cavalry Division's move north might be construed as a hostile activity, and might threaten the peace talks.

Christmas Day 1990 was tough. The "Holiday Blues" syndrome was in full force. Once again, we were fed an extraordinary Christmas dinner, just like Thanksgiving, but, as fate would have it, a shamal blew down from the north just as we were sitting down for dinner. This shamal kicked up a huge sandstorm, which pretty much ruined dinner. "Shield 107," the Armed Forces Network radio station in Dhahran, played instrumental Christmas carols all day long; all this did was depress people that much more. The

fact that the Christmas carols were instrumental was not by accident; the Saudis objected to the religious content of Christmas carol lyrics, and insisted on instrumental-only airings of holiday songs. This caused many soldiers to think, "What are we doing defending this country anyway when we cannot even play our music the way we want to?"

By New Year's, morale had hit rock bottom, and I was extremely concerned about my soldiers' morale. I imagined Americans celebrating to bring in the New Year, while we were slowly going crazy in the barren Arabian desert, not knowing what would happen. I thought about the French Foreign Legion of *Beau Geste* fame, and *le cafard*.

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TAA Wendy

The turning point in the entire deployment occurred on January 7, 1991. That is when we started deploying from AA Horse to TAA Wendy. From here on out, there was no more just training and waiting; from this point on, we would conduct actual military operations against an armed enemy. It would be tough, but our morale would be high because we were doing something concrete. It seems ironic that soldiers' morale would be higher during periods of combat operations than during other phases of the deployment, but that's the way it was. Of course, the stunning success we had against the Iraqis during the Gulf War had a lot to do with that.

The tactical reasons behind moving to TAA Wendy were as follows: CINCCENT decided to "slice" the 1st UK Armored Division to VII Corps instead of having them fight with the USMC units in the east. That left the Marines without heavy armor support. Consequently, CINCCENT directed that the First Cavalry Division give up the "Tiger Brigade" to the Marines. That left the First Cavalry Division with only 2 brigades; therefore, CINCCENT made the First Cavalry Division the ARCENT reserve. As the theater reserve, the 1st Cavalry Division had to re-deploy to KKMC, in the Wadi Al Batin, to be positioned to respond to a variety of contingency plans. The biggest concern was that the Republican Guard would try a preemptive attack down the Wadi Al Batin/Ruqi Road to seize KKMC, an important target because it hosted a theater logistics stockpile and air base.

My battery was tasked to provide the quartering party to provide the initial security at the TAA. I elected to send 1st platoon with 1LT Kears and SFC Wright; I would take personal charge of the main body.

On January 7, 1991, the Quartering Party went to the HET upload site in AA Horse to upload its track vehicles for the long (about 500 km) trip to TAA Wendy. There was an acute shortage of HETs because VII Corps was also using many HETs to move its equipment from the port to their forward assembly areas. As a result, I was only able to send one FDC and 2 howitzer sections with the quartering party (2 howitzers, 2 FAASVs). I could not help but think that the 1st Cavalry Division should have moved in December, as originally scheduled, when HETs were plentiful.

The next day, the remainder of the battery broke down the LSA and prepared to move out to the upload site staging area. While breaking down the LSA, we got a "RED AIR" warning over CF2 (one of our radio nets). It sounded so convincing that I thought it was the real thing, that we would actually come under air attack in a few seconds. My gut tightened up as SFC Ramirez, one of my NCOs, locked and loaded an M-60 machine gun. It turned out to be an overreaction; some defecting Iraqi HIND helicopters had flown into Saudi Arabia and surrendered. The theater wide shortage of HETs was still a big problem, so the best I was able to do that day was to piecemeal out some 1st platoon vehicles (1 howitzer, 1 FAASV).

On January 9, we were directed to send combat vehicles forward first because our higher headquarters thought the Iraqi grab for KKMC was becoming more and more likely. According to intelligence reports, the Iraqis were supposedly staging Republican Guard units to do just that. Consequently, I sent two howitzers forward. It occurred to me that if the Iraqis were to attack, we would be in big trouble. "WE SHOULD HAVE MOVED FORWARD IN DECEMBER!" I thought. From January 10-11, the HET shortage was so acute that I was only able to move a howitzer, FAASV, and M577 FDC track forward.

On January 12, I uploaded only one howitzer, but MAJ Currid (the battalion XO) directed me to trail the HET convoy that was going to KKMC at 1000 hours. My mission, of course, was to keep the unreliable civilian HET drivers focused on getting their cargo to KKMC as quickly as possible. The first problem the convoy encountered occurred on Route "Mercedes" less than 30 miles north of AA Horse. A HET carrying a B Battery howitzer ran off the road; apparently, the driver was more concerned about lighting a cigarette than driving, and lost control of his vehicle. I got them back on the road as quickly as possible, and then chased after the rest of the convoy, which by then had reached the MP traffic control point at *An Nai'riyah* and turned onto the infamous "Tapline Road".

The Tapline Road was the major east-west two lane highway running the length of Saudi Arabia from the Persian Gulf in the east to Jordan in the west. It was so named because it paralleled the oil tapline that was used to pump oil from Persian Gulf petroleum fields to other points throughout the country. The Tapline Road was, on average, only 50 kilometers from Saudi Arabia's northern border; as a result, it was what the military calls "key terrain"; it was also the theater east-west MSR (major supply route).

The traffic on the Tapline Road was so heavy that it quickly earned the nickname "Suicide Alley." The combination of coalition military traffic and Saudi civilian traffic made traffic conditions there insane. It seemed as though safety was not a word in anybody's vocabulary. Big tractor trailers tearing down the highway at 80 mph; soldiers and civilians alike passing vehicles recklessly on a narrow two lane highway with a lot of oncoming traffic. As we made the left hand turn onto the Tapline road, it started pouring, the first rain since I arrived in Saudi Arabia 3 months ago. Other than that, the long march went pretty smoothly until 2300 hours, when the HET carrying one of my howitzers threw its fan blade into its radiator, causing it to break down. With the HET disabled, we downloaded the howitzer, and drove it to MCP (maintenance control point) "Colorado." There, I instructed the section chief to wait for a replacement HET, and I got back into my HMMWV and proceeded on to KKMC.

At 0200 hours, January 13, 1991, I finally pulled into the TAA Wendy HET Download site. We spent a few hours downloading and accounting for personnel and vehicles, and waited for the arrival of the battalion guide, 1LT Frahm. Once he arrived, we proceeded to the 3-82 FA TAA, arriving at about 0500 hours.

After eating some breakfast, I went up to the TOC to talk to the battalion commander, LTC Knight. He briefed me on OPLAN 91-1, defense of KKMC, which was our current contingency plan. Our mission was as follows: On order, we were to move north to Battle Position Duke, located south-east of the Saudi town of Hafar Al Batin, and south of the town of Quasumah. Once there, we were to defend to prevent an Iraqi seizure of King Khalid Military City. The other commanders had done a rather cursory route reconnaissance the day prior, and LTC Knight directed me to go out and do my own recon the next day so I'd be totally up to speed on this contingency plan. I told him "roger," and went back to my battery to get a situation update from my people.

At 1000 hours, 1LT Kearse and 1SG Pape give me a SITREP. At that time, we had only 6 of 8 howitzers, 4 of 8 FAASVs, and only 50% of personnel present for duty. The rest of the battery was either still at AA Horse waiting for transportation, or enroute. At 1200 hours, I inspected the battery area. At this stage of the game, soldiers had been issued ammo, and the atmosphere was extremely tense. It was almost as if I could feel war in the air. By 1400 hours, I had completed my inspection, and went back to my tent. Since my bags were soaked from the movement to TAA Wendy, I downloaded them and hung my soaked clothing around the tent in the hopes that they would dry. At this point, I had been awake for 32 straight hours, and was looking forward to some sleep.

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The Road March from Hell

At 1530 hours, January 13, 1991, I had just gotten ready to go to sleep, when I heard "march order". I thought, "What the hell are they talking about, we just got here." I immediately went up to see the battalion commander, who already had the other battery commanders and primary staff officers with him.

LTC Knight, the battalion commander, told us that the weather in the area was so bad that CENTCOM was unable to see what the Iraqis were doing. Consequently, LTG Franks, the VII Corps commander, was very concerned that they might be up to something, specifically that they might make a grab for KKMC. Because of the weather, our air force was grounded, making this was an ideal time for an Iraqi attack. At the time, the 1st Cav was the ARCENT reserve, and most of VII Corps was still either enroute from Germany, at the port of Dammam downloading ships, or moving vehicles to their TAAs from the port. They were not combat capable at that time, so LTG Franks went to the ARCENT commander, LTG Yeosock, and asked to get the 1st Cav sliced to VII Corps. LTG Yeosock agreed.

Our mission was to execute OPLAN 91-1 (the Defense of KKMC). We had to defend from BP Duke NLT 0300 hours local time, 14 January 1991. BP Duke was located just south of the Tapline road, between Hafar Al Batin and Qaysumah. Our plan was to depart here at 1700 hours, hit the SP (the "start point" of the tactical march, which just happened to be the same location as the HET download site next to KKMC) at 1900 hours, close on BP Duke, and be ready to fire NLT 0300 hours. I thought, "I'm in trouble. I just got here, I've been awake for 33 straight hours, I don't know the plan, I haven't reconned the route, I have only 6 of my howitzers, only 50% of my people, I can't man all of my howitzers." I brought that up to the battalion commander, and he directed A & B batteries to give me 8 people each. They complied, but of course they did not exactly give me their best people. My gut tightened up; the war's about to start, and I am all screwed up.

We packed everything up and got ready to leave as quickly as possible. We packed up only mission essential equipment, and left tents, cots, and connexes in place. We did not have any room to move any "luxury" items. At 1700 hours, we moved out. The order of march for the battalion was A-B-C-CBT Trains. The field trains and the firing battery trains were to follow up the next morning. I left 1SG Pape behind to take charge of the firing battery trains. As we were moving out, I could see French soldiers from the *6e Division Legere* watching us, virtually licking their chops. I figured that they would probably rob us blind of equipment we had to leave behind, which is, as it turned out, exactly what happened.

As is usually the case for an unrehearsed, poorly reconned, night march on unfamiliar terrain, things started to come unglued. At 1730 hours, CPT Batschelet (The Alfa Battery commander who was acting as the convoy commander for the entire battalion) got his vehicle caught in concertina wire. CPT Larsen (the B Battery commander) moved forward and took control of the convoy. Rain was steadily falling down, the moon was not out, and there was virtually no visibility. It was dark as hell, even with NVGs on.

At 1800 hours, CPT Larsen, his PADs vehicle, and the A Battery FDC and one howitzer section get stuck in a *sabka*. A *sabka* is a patch of desert with a particularly high water table. When it rains, it becomes a marsh. The problem is that there is no way of being able to tell the difference between a *sabka* and normal desert until you get stuck. In any event, CPT Larsen called me to take control of the convoy. I went to the front of the convoy and promptly became stuck myself. The battalion commander,

who was forward with the brigade commander, was not happy when he heard the news. His reaction was, "Just f***ing great. We're going to war, and my three firing battery commanders are all screwed up," or words to that effect.

At 1900 hours, I finally got unstuck, and took the rest of the convoy forward to the SP. I hit the SP about one and a half hours late. Then, if things were not going bad enough, my radio went suddenly and mysteriously dead. Of course, since I was the convoy commander, people were trying to contact me right and left, to no avail. Having been awake for about 40 straight hours, I was virtually hallucinating from fatigue, so it did not occur to me how unusual it was that my driver and I were not hearing any traffic on a normally busy radio net. The battalion S-3, MAJ Johnson, finally flagged me down, absolutely livid. "WHAT IN THE F*** ARE YOU DOING? The whole world's trying to contact you! Why aren't you answering your f***ing radio?!!" That outburst shook me out of my lethargy, I took a look at my radio, saw that it was fried, and informed the S-3. At that point, MAJ Johnson took over the convoy, and I fell back in with my battery.

We continued moving forward through the driving rain. Of course, MAJ Johnson, the new convoy commander, did not fair much better than the previous three. His problem was with his LORAN receiver; it wasn't giving a valid solution (we found out later that the Saudis had taken down the LORAN station at *Ar Ruqi* to prevent the Iraqis from seizing it), so he had to "dead reckon" with a dashboard compass and his vehicle's odometer, an extremely difficult proposition at best. After a few hours of wandering around the desert, we finally got to the Wadi Al Batin. Normally a dry river bed, the Wadi had become a raging river because of the torrential rainfall. "Just great," I thought, "now we get to do an unrehearsed, zero visibility river crossing." After about 30 minutes of looking, we found a fording spot, but several tracked vehicles "threw track" crossing the Wadi, and had to be recovered. SFC Wright, one of my platoon sergeants, did a great job recovering many vehicles, to include pulling my vehicle out twice with his "war wagon." If that was not enough, vehicles that had been run all night started running out of gas. It was about 0400 hours by the time we had crossed the Wadi Al Batin. We were still about 50 kilometers from our battle position.

After crossing the Wadi, we continued to head northeast toward the "Ruqi Road", the hardball road that paralleled the Wadi Al Batin from the border town of Ruqi, through Hafar Al Batin, to *Riyadh* (the Saudi capital city). When we got to the Ruqi Road, we were met by the battalion XO, MAJ Currid, who arrived from AA Horse with the rest of my battery. Of course, with Murphy's Law in full effect that night, a car with fleeing Saudis came down Ruqi road from Hafar Al Batin, going like hell, with no headlights on. The car hit the troop carrying bus going about 70 mph. Of course, the Saudis were not wearing seat belts (they very rarely do), and they went through the windshield, dying instantly. Their corpses had the consistency of bean bags.

CPT Anderle, the HHB commander, had set up a refuel site across the road. We crossed the road, refueled, re-formed our convoy, and consolidated back into battery sets. After refueling, my battery departed at 0600 hours, and drove the remaining 45 kilometers to battle position Duke, arriving, ready to fire, at 0900 hours, six hours late. After being awake for 52 straight hours (and going through what was henceforth known as the "Road March from Hell"), I collapsed. The Road March From Hell was finally over.

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"D-Day, H-Hour"

The Iraqis never did attack, and the weather cleared up. It ended up being another "boy who cried wolf" story. But our tactical posture was nonetheless improved, and we continued to improve our position.

0800 hours, 16 January 1991, local (Corresponding to midnight, 15 January 1991 EST) marked the passing of the UN deadline. The question then became, "What were we going to do about it?" I got my answer that morning, when LTC Knight called the BCs up for a meeting. Appearing almost sad and regretful, LTC Knight informed us that the bombing campaign would start "in the next four days." I went back to my battery, went from section to section, let them know what was going on, and gave them my "Patton" speech.

At 0230 hours, 17 January 1991, I was awakened by one of my soldiers yelling "REDCON 1". I went to my vehicle, got on the radio, and called the TOC to see what was going on. The shift NCO told me to come up to the TOC for a meeting. At the TOC, LTC Knight informed us that the Air Campaign had begun, that we would move north of Hafar Al Batin to set up a defensive battle position. Our mission would be to defend Hafar Al Batin and cover VII Corps' deployment from the port to their TAAs. The realization that we were now in a shooting war caused my gut to tighten up. I returned to my battery and briefed my people. My people seemed frightened, but they packed up their gear and got ready to move out.

The adrenaline of the moment helped us to be ready to move in record time. Once ready, we sat in our vehicles and waited for the word to move out. At this time, RED AIR and SCUD alerts started coming across CF2 with regularity. The reports were erroneous, but we did not know that at the time, so people started getting just plain scared. "What in the hell did we get ourselves into," I thought. With not much else to do, we tuned into AFN. We heard the president's speech, and GEN Schwarzkopf's speech. Sitting in my vehicle and worrying about combat made me sick to my stomach, so I willed myself to clear my head of all worries and focus on performing my job. We had been directed to start taking PB tablets (a nerve agent antidote; we were directed to take one tablet every eight hours), so I got out of my vehicle and walked around making sure my soldiers were taking them. Unfortunately, we found out real soon that an immediate and undesirable side effect of PB tablets was that they tended to cause a temporary loss of bowel control.

0630, 17 January 1991: We got in the Brigade wedge formation, moved east along the Tapline road just past Qaysumah, and then crossed the Tapline road and proceeded north-northwest to our battle position. However, an Egyptian unit on the north side of the Tapline Road got spooked and started shooting at the lead brigade element with small arms fire. We withdrew south of the Tapline road, and waited for the civil affairs people to clear it up with the Egyptians. We waited for several hours, during which time we heard glowing initial reports on AFN about how the bombing was going. We saw numerous air sorties going back and forth between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, all ours. There was absolutely no evidence of "RED AIR," something that made us feel much better. Finally, the word came down to go back to BP Duke, so we turned around and headed back. Then they countermanded that order, and we turned around again and executed our mission as planned.

1500 hours, 17 January 1991: My battery was the lead element in the battalion convoy. As we waited to cross the Tapline road, we saw massive traffic heading west, mostly HETs, VII Corps units, and British troops. Then I saw a HET convoy carrying 24th Infantry Division tanks. At first, I thought "what the hell are 24 ID units doing this far west? Then it occurred to me that USCENTCOM must be planning an envelopment, the so-called "Hail Mary Pass." "Good plan," I thought. Finally, after about 45 minutes of waiting, the MPs manning a traffic control point stopped traffic, and allowed us to cross. We headed north, passed a wide berth around the Egyptians, headed north-west, passed in front of Qaysumah and Hafar Al Batin, crossed the Ruqi Road, and, at nightfall, occupied a battle position just north of Hafar Al Batin.

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"First to Defend"

The First Cavalry Division's mission from 18 January - 12 February was to: defend the Wadi Al Batin/Ruqi Road/Neutral Zone sector (also known as the "Ruqi Pocket") to prevent an Iraqi spoiling attack along the Ruqi road; prevent Iraqi ground reconnaissance of the Tapline road; and prepare for future operations. As theater reserve, we had a wide variety of contingency plans. The First Cavalry Division was the only unit defending in sector at that time. The Syrians, Egyptians, French, other American units, and Brits were repositioning to support the theater ground offensive plan.

Events from 18 January - 29 January 1991:

When we got settled in our BP, I sent my First Sergeant back to TAA Wendy with a detail to recover tents, cots, and other life support items. The French Foreign Legion unit there had robbed us blind, cutting locks on our connexes to get at our stuff. Still, "Top" was able to recover a lot of good stuff that made us a little more comfortable. This helped, because weather was, for the most part, rainy, cold, and miserable.

A Syrian division, as part of the theater wide repositioning, moved from west to east, passing to our front. CENTCOM was afraid that we might get into a fire fight with the Syrians. The Syrians had Soviet equipment, and our two countries had never been big fans of each other anyway. Originally, CINCCENT wanted to move the First Cavalry Division south of the Tapline Road to prevent a fratricide event from occurring, but Division CG talked him out of it. He said that his troops were disciplined enough to avoid such an incident. CINCCENT backed down; that was good for us, because it would have been a major operation to move everything we owned out of our prepared positions, move about 30 kilometers south, only to turn around, move back, and dig in again. It was foggy as hell that day, but the Syrians passed by without an incident.

We were given a warning order that we would conduct artillery raids in the Wadi Al Batin as part of the theater deception plan. I rehearsed a practice artillery raid with my battery at night, just to make sure I had it nailed down. It is extremely important for a unit to rehearse combat operations; a unit that rehearses combat operations gives itself the opportunity to identify and correct problem areas before the bullets start flying. Mistakes in combat cost lives.

After a while, soldiers started becoming bored, nervous, and antsy. They wanted to get the war over with, but were not being kept informed due to the need for secrecy in our mission. "When are we going to start doing something?" was the most frequently asked question. Mitigating this somewhat was the information we were getting from "Wizard 106" (the AFRTS radio station set up at KKMC; called "Wizard" after the Wizard of Oz, because KKMC, due to its secretive nature, was nicknamed "Emerald City"), which ran continuous war coverage, especially CNN Broadcasts.

Also, the First Cavalry Division set up a division shower point with a "Wolfburger" hamburger stand at the Hafar Al Batin hospital. This was a big morale builder. Hafar Al Batin was pretty much deserted, all the civilians having fled the war zone, so we basically had the town to ourselves. The division shower point gave soldiers a few good hours of "R & R", a nice break from the daily grind. Occasionally, the Iraqis would make going to the shower point "high adventure" by shooting SCUDs at Hafar Al Batin. Most of the time, the Patriot missile battery responsible for covering Hafar Al Batin would intercept the SCUDs, although there was one missile that did get through. Fortunately, it landed 500 meters from the Hafar Al Batin hospital, and caused very little damage; only broken windows and ruptured eardrums.

From 29 January-13 February 1991, we repositioned to conduct an operation called the "Defense of Ruqi Road." We had the same basic mission; we simply repositioned farther north to support future operations, namely the feint we had as an "on order" mission. We went north to a point just barely outside of the artillery range of Iraqi forces arrayed to our front. We conducted daily survivability moves at first to prevent being victimized by Iraqi counterfire. Then, when engineer assets became available, we dug ourselves in and hardened our positions.

We practiced three artillery raids, this time at the battalion level. These were full scale rehearsals. All three were conducted at night, of course. We learned many valuable lessons. For example, commanders had to keep both a LORAN and a GPS receiver in the lead vehicle for navigation purposes, because the time window from about 2300 hours to 0200 hours (local time) was a bad window for NAVSTAR satellite tracking. Of course, we rehearsed the "Defense of Ruqi Road" frequently to insure that we had it nailed down. This mission was an absolutely critical mission, because the First Cavalry Division was the only unit that was not repositioning to support the "Hail Mary" plan, thereby making it the only unit available to defend against potential Iraqi attacks. We were truly the "First to Defend." There were many false reports about Iraqi incursions into Saudi Arabia around the town of Ruqi, which made everybody antsy. The only military activity to speak of, though, was an occasional Iraqi shelling of Ar Ruqi.

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The Battle of Ruqi Pocket

Overall Mission: Our mission was to conduct an aggressive program of raids, reconnaissance's in force, deceptions, and feints one and a half weeks prior to G-day to make the Iraqis think that we were prepping the Wadi Al Batin for the main attack. The desired effect was that the Iraqis would think that the main coalition ground attack would come up the Wadi Al Batin, a natural invasion route, and they would therefore beef up their forces there, at the expense of the Western flank, where VII Corps would conduct the main attack.

15 February 1991: Operation Berm Buster

The Plan: TF 1-32 AR, with engineer support, would blow a hole in the smuggler's Berm separating Saudi Arabia and Iraq to make the Iraqis believe that we were opening up an invasion route. A PSYOPs unit provided taped recordings of tracked vehicles to make the Iraqis think that we were marshaling forces in that area. 3-82 FA was the direct support field artillery battalion. During Berm Buster, 3-82 FA would fire a 7 minute prep to suppress the Iraqi security zone, and then fire smoke to screen the breaching of the Berm, as well as Copperhead to take out hard Iraqi targets, such as bunkers; then, at nightfall, we would fire Illumination to help TF 1-32 spot Iraqi recon patrols. H-hour for this mission was 1630 hours. Following completion of Operation Berm Buster, we would make a lateral night move, west to east along the Berm to the Wadi Al Batin, to participate in Operation Red Storm, a massive aviation/artillery raid with an H-hour of 0100 hours, 16 February 1991. All in all, it would prove to be a long day.

0500 hours, 15 February: *Stand-to.* I went to the TOC to go over last minute details with the commanders and staff. Everybody was very nervous, since it was our first combat operation. As a precaution, the battalion commander directed that everybody wear body armor ("flak vests") for this operation. Flak vests were very hot and uncomfortable to wear with all the other TA-50 and MOPP gear, but, given the circumstances, it seemed to be a prudent precaution.

0800 hours, 15 February: The battalion moved out to link up behind TF 1-32 at the line of departure (LD). Our movement formation *was platoons in wedge, batteries in column, battalion in column*. The order of march was B battery, the TOC, A battery, C battery, and the Combat Trains.

1000-1400 hours, 15 February. We waited at the LD for 4 hours. Our early move-out was a typical overreaction, I thought. I was nervous, and wanted to get the whole thing over with. The waiting was killing me. Waiting for battle is worse than fighting the battle. I imagined the worse. My stomach hurt

with fear.

1400 hours, 15 February: we moved out, moving very fast, and it was hard to keep up with the faster tanks and Bradley's of TF 1-32. At 1545, we hit the release point (RP), and I peeled out toward my initial position. At 1609, I heard "red dog 6300" on the battalion net, the code word to occupy and establish a firing capability. We occupied. It was the best occupation I had ever seen; the soldiers were really pumped. At 1615 hours, we were ready to shoot. We started computing data for the 7 targets of the prep, and getting the data down to the guns.

1628 hours, 15 February: the H-hour was originally 1635 hours, but COL House, the brigade commander, changed it to 1630. We were the only battery that was ready to fire the prep, and we executed it flawlessly. The other two batteries missed one or more of the seven targets, drawing a sharp rebuke from the battalion S-3 on the battalion net. I felt very proud of my battery. After the prep, we made a 1 Km survivability move. We then shot smoke and Copperhead, while TF 1-32 went through the breach made by the engineers, and set up security on the Iraqi side of the Berm. Night fell; the PSYOPs detachment proceeded with the deception operation (the vehicle noises), and the Iraqis started throwing out some sporadic mortar fire. Alfa battery shot some Illumination to help the maneuver units spot Iraqi patrolling activity.

Operation Red Storm

2000 hours, 15 February 1991: TF 1-32 withdrew, and we were released to transition to our Operation Red Storm positions. Operation Red Storm was a VII Corps Artillery-Aviation raid up the Wadi Al Batin designed to make the Iraqis believe that the Wadi was being prepped for the main offensive. It featured the 11th Aviation Brigade, the 1st Cavalry Division Artillery, and elements of the VII Corps Artillery. Just prior to 0100 hours, 16 February 1991, the artillery units were to fire a 3 minute prep on selected targets, followed by Apache attack helicopters crossing the Berm to engage targets of opportunity. At the same time, USAF assets were attacking deep targets.

We moved in battalion column, order of march B-TOC-A-C-CBT. It was dark as hell, zero visibility. My GPS was not tracking satellites, as usual (During that time of day, the angle between the NAVSTAR satellites and the earth was bad, so GPS receivers could not get a good fix on the required minimum of 3 satellites.) Fortunately, I had thought ahead and had my 1SG's LORAN receiver. Operation Berm Buster had given me a great deal of confidence, so I wasn't scared anymore. We had plenty of time to move the 15 km to get in position just prior to H-hour. I was completely focused on keeping the convoy together, avoiding breaks in the convoy, and ensuring that nobody got lost. We decided to do the march without any lights, not even blackout markers, for OPSEC reasons. We had NVGs, of course, but with zero visibility, it was tough to see the vehicle in front of you.

Then it happened -- my worst fears were realized. At 2130 hours, C-14 (one of my howitzers) slid into an anti-tank ditch, injuring the section chief and his driver. SFC Wright stopped to handle the situation, and the rest of the convoy stopped along with him. Meanwhile, I, unaware of what had just happened, and continued on with 3 gun sections and the 1st platoon FDC. By the time SFC Wright called me on the radio to inform me of what had happened, there was a hopeless break in the convoy. I called LTC Knight to inform him of what had happened. He was clearly not happy, but kept his cool and told me to get forward with as much combat power as possible. However, I did not even have 50 percent of my battery. I looked at my watch -- three hours to go until H-hour. I looked at my LORAN -- only three kilometers to go to our position area. I called LTC Knight and told him that we had time, and I was going to take a shot at finding and reuniting my battery. He said "OK, but hurry!" MAJ Currid, the battalion XO, who was behind the stalled portion of my battery, called me on the radio and said he would help me get my battery back together. I told him that he could help me better by taking care of my two casualties, that I could handle reuniting my battery internally. He directed me to evacuate my casualties to the battalion aide station, located with the combat trains just behind the stalled portion of my battery. SFC Wright, who was monitoring the battalion net, heard the conversation and evacuated the casualties. Meanwhile, I gave 1LT Al Kears, my first platoon leader, an azimuth to the stalled convoy,

and sent him back to get them. He found them quickly (thank God), and guided them in on my red flashlight signal. Once the battery was re--formed, I breathed a huge sigh of relief, and moved on.

At midnight, we pulled into position, and occupied. We computed firing data for our target, which was an Iraqi radar station. We would fire 40 rounds of high explosive (HE) rocket assisted projectiles (RAP) on it in 3 minutes of firing. Once we were done computing data, we sent it down to the guns, and the battery laid on it. Then, we waited for H-hour. We turned off all of our vehicle engines and lights to keep any Iraqi patrols from detecting our presence. We really had our asses hanging out; sitting in position in the security zone for about 45 minutes, I was concerned about an Iraqi patrol seeing or hearing us, and calling in artillery fire on us. Fortunately, that did not happen.

At 0055 hours, we fired our mission. The sky lit up with MLRS and RAP. At 0058 hours, we heard "Check fire!" over our radio nets, followed almost immediately by the sound of Apaches flying overhead into Iraq to engage their assigned targets. In the distance, we could hear the "popcorn" sound of USAF cluster bomblets striking deep Iraqi targets. It was as if the Fourth of July had come early. I almost felt sorry for the poor Iraqis on the receiving end of it. We quickly "march ordered" and moved south about five kilometers, where we occupied positions to provide support for 1-7 CAV, the division cavalry squadron.

February 16-18, 1991: We had three things going on: be prepared to shoot in support of 1-7 CAV, conduct maintenance, and prepare for Operation Knight Strike. Operation Knight Strike was a reconnaissance in force conducted by TF 1-5 CAV up the Wadi Al Batin to determine the strength, composition, and disposition of Iraqi forces in the area. This operation was intended to make the Iraqis think that we were definitely thinking of a major attack up the Wadi Al Batin. It would be the first mounted combat in Iraq during the war. It would also be the bloodiest battle of the war for the First Cavalry Division.

Operation Knight Strike

On the night of February 19, 1991, Team A, TF 1-5 CAV conducted a night route reconnaissance for the task force. My battery was selected to provide artillery support for this night route reconnaissance. At 1600 hours, I moved my battery up to the smuggler's Berm. At nightfall, A/1-5 crossed the Berm. 1LT Aaron Geduldig, the Team fire support officer, called in a DPICM (dual purpose improved conventional munitions) fire mission on some Iraqi security force units. Following the completion of that mission, we fired high explosive projectiles with concrete piercing fuzes at the so-called *Beau Geste* house. The *Beau Geste* house was a Saudi border station that had been taken over by the Iraqis, and was so named because it resembled the prototypical French Foreign Legion desert post as portrayed in the epic film *Beau Geste*. We scored four direct hits, destroying the station and the Iraqi soldiers inside. We fired various other fire missions at targets in the Iraqi security zone, presumably with good effects, since the fire support officers at the company team and task force levels seemed pleased. I moved both of my platoons at about midnight, (one platoon at a time to maintain a continuous firing capability) because I was concerned about being acquired by Iraqi target acquisition assets and receiving counterfire. My fears were unfounded, because Iraqi counterfire was never forthcoming.

While my battery was forward supporting the route recon, the rest of the battalion was in the rear preparing for the operation. I missed out on all of this, which concerned me, because, by 0600 hours, my battery was low on ammunition and fuel, and I had not received the new COMSEC variable required to communicate on the battalion's secure FM radio networks. I called back to the battalion executive officer and voiced my concerns. He told me, "Don't worry about it, we'll get you everything you need. Just be prepared to fall in with the rest of the battalion when we pass by you." That is exactly what we did, and we got everything we needed "on the fly." It wasn't pretty, but we got the job done.

Shortly after joining the battalion wedge formation, we occupied and established a firing capability. TF 1-5 CAV passed by us and thrust into Iraq. Then, things started going wrong. The battalion tactical operations center (TOC) communications went down. As a result, they could not communicate with any

of the fire support officers and forward observers who were forward with the task force. Meanwhile, the task force continued its march into Iraq, and we did not shoot any fire missions: no prep to soften Iraqi positions, no smoke to screen the task force's movement. This struck me as being very unusual. Our battalion commander became extremely angry; I could hear him on the radio screaming at the battalion S-3 (the plans, operations, and training officer): "I want you to get ammo! I don't care what you have to do! Meanwhile, the Brigade COLT spotted a battery of Iraqi AT-12's dug into the side of the Wadi Al Batin, and called in a fire mission. We heard the mission come down, and oriented our tubes on the target, and waited for the command to fire. However, the command to fire is not forthcoming. "What the hell is going on up there?" I thought.

Then, tragedy struck. The Iraqi anti-tank weapons dug in along the side of the Wadi opened up on the task force, striking a Bradley and a Vulcan tank that had stopped to pick up a few Iraqi soldiers who had surrendered. Three U.S. soldiers died and seven were wounded. The brigade COLT (Combat Observation and Lasing Team) tried to get an Immediate Suppression mission through, but the battalion TOC could not hear him. At this point, the battalion commander, who himself was coming under direct Iraqi fire, went absolutely ballistic. He called the A Battery commander and gave him control of the battalion. Outraged, we shot volley after volley of DPICM, carpeting the general area of the Iraq AT-12 positions. Meanwhile, Medevac helicopters flew forward in an attempt to evacuate the casualties. They got through under fire, and brought the men out. TF 1-5 pressed on, and we shot smoke to screen and obscure their movement. As the task force pressed on, they came across an Iraqi battle position composed of Iraqi dismounted troops in an open trench line. The task force S-3 called in a fire mission, and we pounded the trench line with HE (high explosive) projectiles, using a variable time fuse to get an air burst effect. The HE projectiles exploded in the air approximately 20 meters above the trench line, raining huge, jagged shell fragments down onto the terrified Iraqi soldiers exposed in the trenches below. Many Iraqi soldiers died, and the rest surrendered.

At this point in time, the Blackjack Brigade commander, COL Randolph House, decided that we had made our point and executed a successful feint, and it was time to pull back into Saudi Arabia. We shot smoke to cover TF 1-5's withdrawal, then moved back about two kilometers ourselves. By the time we finished our move and reestablished a firing capability, it had gotten dark. Most of TF 1-5's vehicles had disengaged from contact and pulled back into Saudi Arabia, but they were still trying to recover a few damaged and disabled vehicles that were still in Iraq by towing them out with M-88 recovery vehicles. As the lumbering M-88s were towing the damaged and disabled vehicles back toward the break in the Berm, an Iraqi mortar battery was taking potshots at them.

Meanwhile, we were feeding chow to our soldiers back in our fallback positions, the first hot meal we had had in days. Just as chow was served, our direct support Q-36 firefinder radar set picked up the Iraqi mortar rounds being fired at the TF 1-5 recovery vehicles. By back-plotting the ballistic trajectory of the mortar rounds, the Q-36's on-board computer was able to determine the location of the Iraqi mortar battery. They promptly sent the fire mission to the battalion fire direction center, which issued fire commands to the three firing batteries.

I was eating dinner at my HMMWV with one of my platoon sergeants when I heard my cannon crew members yell "Fire mission!" Wondering what the hell was going on, I ran over to my FDC. "Fire mission against an Iraqi mortar battery," they told me. We fired one volley of DPICM at the Iraqi mortars, which apparently was effective, because we never had any more trouble from that Iraqi mortar battery again. Once TF 1-5 was completely withdrawn, we withdrew back to our original positions to prepare for G-Day.

All in all, the Battle of Ruqi pocket was a success. With its feints, raids, and deceptions, the First Cavalry Division (especially the 2nd Blackjack Brigade) kept four Iraqi Divisions tied up in the Wadi Al Batin, and kept the Republican Guard divisions' focus on the Wadi as the main attack route. This allowed the VII Corps and XVIII Airborne Corps to move west and position themselves, unhindered, for the Grand Finale: the "Hail Mary" Play.

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"G-Day"

The First Cavalry Division's mission on G-day (February 24, 1991) was to conduct a feint attack up the Wadi Al Batin to make the Iraqis think that our attack was in fact the Theater's main ground attack. Meanwhile, far to the west, the XVIII Airborne Corps and the VII Corps were already striking deep into Iraq.

At 1200 hours on G-day, we deployed from our Ruqi road positions to the Berm to participate in a DIVARTY counterfire program (a "counterfire program" is a series of fire missions designed to neutralize enemy fire support assets). It was a pretty straightforward mission; by then we had a "been there, done that" attitude. In fact, after the Battle of Ruqi Pocket, we considered ourselves "seasoned veterans." This caused me some concern, because people were becoming too cocky and complacent for my comfort, both up and down the chain of command. We spent over an hour in position in broad daylight, firing volley after volley at Iraqi positions, without making so much as one survivability move. Throughout the counterfire program, I constantly had to yell at soldiers for taking their helmets and body armor off. "This is a combat situation, damn it!", I would tell them. It seemed as though our soldiers were regarding their Iraqi opposition with a great deal of contempt at this stage of the game; contempt that was perhaps well deserved, but it's that kind of arrogance that gets people killed in war.

At about 1400 hours, following completion of the DIVARTY counterfire program, we moved east along the Berm to the Wadi Al Batin to fire the prep that initiated Operation Deep Strike. Deep Strike was the Blackjack Brigade's feint attack up the Wadi Al Batin. We fired lots of rounds -- obviously, everybody wanted to avoid the loss of life that occurred during Knight Strike -- and the Brigade moved steadily forward. We were firing so much ammo that we almost ran out -- ammunition HEMMTs moved full speed back and forth between the ASP (ammunition resupply point) and the firing batteries in a frantic effort to keep the firing batteries resupplied.

At 1900 hours on G-day, we crossed the Berm and moved forward into Iraq to keep up with the forward progress of the maneuver elements. It was already nightfall; a big concern we had at this stage of the game was surface ordnance. In the dark, it was very difficult to make out the telltale signs of minefields laid along our axis of advance, as well as unexploded friendly munitions, such as USAF cluster bomblets and the DPICM bomblets that we had fired earlier that day. What a cruel irony it would be, I thought, to be killed by a DPICM bomblet fired by my own unit. We were also concerned about running into bypassed Iraqi units; tankers and Bradley mechanized infantry units usually bypass enemy units of platoon size or smaller, because they don't want to delay their rate of advance unnecessarily. The last thing we needed was to be shot up by a bypassed, scared, and isolated, Iraqi tank platoon.

It got darker as we proceeded into Iraq. As was usual for that time of day, my GPS receiver stopped tracking the required three satellites to get reliable position and azimuth data. Consequently, I had to navigate using the old-fashioned way: dashboard compass and vehicle odometer. This meant that our progress was excessively slow. Finally, I viewed through my NVGs a screen line of Bradley's. I decided that I had gone far enough, and I called my PADS vehicle up to verify my grid location. PADS confirmed that we were within 200 meters of our destination grid, so I got on the battery net and directed the battery to emplace. We immediately started shooting fire missions, and shot all night long.

At 0800 hours the next morning, the Brigade advanced deeper into Iraq. After about a 20 kilometer advance, the Brigade hit a fire trench (the Iraqis would fill trenches with petroleum, light them on fire, and use them as an obstacle. They were an effective obstacle indeed). This caused the Brigade to pause their advance, so we took this opportunity to displace and move forward as well. Once we got to our forward positions, we fired non-stop at dug-in Iraqis on the other side of the fire trench. For the first time, we got some Iraqi counterfire; nothing really heavy, mainly sporadic and inaccurate cannon

artillery fire. The closest the Iraqi artillery ever got to our positions was about one kilometer; close enough to get our attention, but not close enough to really hurt us. The only thing the Iraqi artillerymen accomplished with their counterfire was to expose their own positions to detection from our Q-36 radar. We had a MLRS platoon from the 1st Cav DIVARTY MLRS battery reinforcing us, and they quickly silenced any Iraqi counterfire threat while we continued to fire in support of maneuver. As a precaution, we conducted a survivability move of about 3 kilometers. Following that, we fired suppression missions to assist our aviators in extracting the crew of an Apache helicopter that was shot down on the Iraqi side of the fire trench.

By now, the VII Corps had made initial contact with the Iraqi Republican Guard. Therefore, it was pointless for us to continue a feint attack, for we had already accomplished our mission of tying down four Iraqi divisions while the VII Corps conducted their envelopment from the west. CINCCENT made the decision to withdraw us back into Saudi Arabia, and then commit us to VII Corps so that we could assist them in the final destruction of the vaunted Iraqi Republican Guard. Therefore, at 1700 hours, February 25, 1991, we received a change of mission, fired a massive smoke screen, and, behind that, the Blackjack Brigade withdrew back into Saudi Arabia.

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Destroy the Republican Guard

"Send in the First Team. Destroy the Republican Guard."

GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf

The Mission: After Operation Deep Strike, our new mission was to join the VII Corps' destruction of the RGFC (Republican Guard Force Command) in the Basra Pocket. We were to accomplish this by moving west about 100 kilometers, passing through the First Infantry Division's breach, thrusting north to VII Corps' left flank, and, then, finally, attacking east toward Basra to complete the envelopment of the Republican Guard divisions.

2100 hours, 25 February 1991: After completing our withdrawal from Iraq, we moved south a few kilometers and went through a ROM (rearm/refuel on the move) site to replenish our fuel and ammunition. After refueling, we moved about 35 kilometers toward the Southwest to a staging area. I led the convoy for the battalion; once again, my GPS receiver was not tracking sufficient satellites to return a solution, so I used my dashboard compass and vehicle odometer to navigate. It was dark as hell, even with night vision goggles, so the convoy moved ahead extremely slowly. We closed into the staging area at about midnight, and, once there, we established security, and went to sleep.

0900 hours, 26 February 1991: The entire brigade lined up into a brigade "column of sixes" (six columns of vehicles lined up side by side), looking like a giant phalanx. At 1200 hours, we rolled out toward the west into the First Infantry Division's sector. As we rolled toward the breach site, I did not have much to do or think about, so I started imagining the worst; I began getting nervous again. I started thinking that the combat operations we had been on in the Ruqi Pocket were nothing compared to the battle we were about to get involved in; instead of fighting third string, demoralized Iraqi draftees equipped with obsolete weapons, we would now be fighting the highly vaunted Republican Guard in what would probably be the biggest tank battle since World War II. The Republican Guard troops were professional soldiers, battle-hardened by eight years of combat with Iran, equipped with state-of-the-art Soviet equipment. We were not getting much information about how VII Corps was doing at this time; this information void only fed the uncertainty, which fed the fear.

1900 hours, 26 February 1991: The first thing we did when we arrived at the breach site was to go through another ROM to ensure that all vehicles had a full tank of diesel before thrusting into Iraq. The ROM site was set up and run by the COSCOM (Corps Support Command), so all that we had to do was to line up, get fuel, and move out toward the passage lane. By the time we passed through the ROM, it was getting very dark. After getting fuel, the fuel handler wished me luck, and we staged to the entrance of passage lane "Kilo" to prepare for the forward passage of lines. Once all vehicles had completed refueling and we linked up with our passage lane guide, we rolled through the passage lane toward Iraq, being very careful to ensure that we did not stray from the passage lane into the adjacent minefields and obstacles.

0015 hours, 27 February 1991: It took us until shortly after midnight to traverse the entire length of the First Infantry Division breach site. After clearing passage lane Kilo, we closed on attack position "Blackjack," and changed our formation from column (our "admin" movement formation) to wedge (our tactical movement formation). Once the entire division was closed on Blackjack and had formed up into the wedge formation (the whole process took about 15 minutes), we moved out toward Objective Lee, our first objective, going like the hammers of hell. It was like a race track, everybody was going so fast. Our 20 year old M109 howitzers had a hard time keeping up with their swifter M1 Abrams and M2 Bradley cousins. One of my FDC tracks started having fuel injector problems; unable to keep up with the fast pace of the advance, it started falling behind. I had radio communications with the FDO, and told him to continue to press forward, and keep me informed of what was happening. I was concerned for their safety; there were a lot of ways that a lone M577 command post carrier could get in trouble in the Iraqi desert. They could run into bypassed Iraqi units, or be mistaken by follow -- on Allied forces as an Iraqi vehicle. Either way, they would be "dead meat." Fortunately, they managed to stay reasonably close to us.

0330 hours, 27 February 1991: We arrived at OBJ Lee, refueled, and got about 30 minutes of sleep. At 0530 hours, we resumed the march toward our next objective, OBJ Horse. Enroute to OBJ Horse, we ran into a fire fight between elements of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment and the Iraqi Republican Guard *Tawakalna* Division. The 2nd ACR troopers were decimating their Iraqi opponents; we could see AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters pop up and launch TOWs at distant Iraqi targets, which would go up in an array of colorful secondary explosions. Not wanting to risk a fratricide incident, we stopped in place and awaited further instructions while our "higher-ups" established communications with the 2nd ACR. While we were waiting, I watched in amazement at soldiers casually standing on top on their tracked vehicles to take photographs of the engagement in a tourist-like fashion, totally oblivious to the carnage that was occurring. The word finally came down that the 2nd ACR had the engagement under control, and we moved around the fight to the west, and then headed due north.

1000 Hours, 27 February 1991: As we continued our march toward OBJ Horse, we were concerned mainly about running out of fuel. The supply lines extended back to Log Base "Echo" in Saudi Arabia, about 150 kilometers to our rear, and it was tough keeping our vehicles and HEMMT tankers full of enough fuel to sustain our attack into Iraq. After our last refueling at OBJ Lee, the Battalion XO and S-1 had taken the empty tankers back to a "LRP" (logistics resupply point) set up by the 1st Cav DISCOM (Division Support Command) to get them refilled. As we were approaching OBJ Horse, they were way overdue. Moreover, we could not talk to them on the radio. Everybody, especially the battalion commander, started getting extremely nervous; not only were we concerned about their safety, but we were also concerned about running out of fuel. The direct path between the LRP and OBJ Horse led straight through the engagement that we had just bypassed, and we were unable to get them on the radio to inform them of what was happening. I could only imagine what would happen if MAJ Currid, CPT Schrankel, and a couple of unarmed HEMMT tankers stumbled into that engagement. It would probably ruin their whole day, not to mention leave us without fuel.

1200 hours, 27 February 1991: We were finally able to get a hold of our fuel convoy and inform them of the 2ACR battle. They thanked us profusely, and drew a wide berth to the west around it. At 1300 hours, running on empty, we pulled into OBJ Horse. Just as we came to a stop, CPT Schrankel pulled up with the fuel HEMMTs, not a moment too soon. We fueled the vehicles up, pulled some quick preventive maintenance, ate a MRE, and prepared for our next mission, which was to turn and drive due east, and help the First Armored Division complete the destruction of the Iraqi Republican Guard

Medina Division.

1500 hours, 27 February 1991: As we crossed the line of departure heading east toward Basra, Iraq, I thought, "here we go, this operation will separate the men from the boys." We were about to participate in the largest tank battle since World War II. As I gazed upon the brigade wedge formation, even I, hardened and cynical after four months in the desert, was struck by the awe of the combat power that I was part of. An armada of combat vehicles as far as the eye could see, arrayed across the desert floor, churning forward toward its destination, as unstoppable as a herd of enraged elephants. We passed a Bradley fighting vehicle transporting a group of Iraqi EPWs (enemy prisoners of war) back to the rear. As I looked at their demoralized, bewildered faces, I could not help but wonder what they must have thought about this sea of war vehicles thrusting toward their hapless brethren. We passed some Bedouin herdsman, who looked at us nonchalantly. I felt good, since I still had all of my vehicles and people; no vehicle breakdowns, no combat losses. As we moved on toward Basra, the tension mounted. Finally, at 1900 hours, just after dusk, we came to an abrupt halt, about 40 kilometers southwest of Basra. I thought, "The shit's about to hit the fan." But we did nothing but sit there.

1900 hours, 27 February 1991: Finally, we were ordered to emplace, and set up a hasty defense. We had stumbled upon the tail end of the 1st Armored Division, and had units and vehicles intermixed in the dark with 1AD units. The Division and Corps commanders felt that it was prudent to halt the 1st Cav to avoid fratricide, and to wait until first light to commit us to the ongoing battle. The plan was this -- at first light, we would resume the attack around the 1st AD while the 1st AD fixed the Medina Division, and envelop the Iraqi unit from the northwest to prevent them from escaping back toward Basra. Once we were emplaced and security was out, I collapsed from exhaustion, dead tired after a 24 hour, 300 kilometer thrust into Iraq.

0500 hours, 28 February 1991: I awoke to the sounds of VII Corps and 1st AD Artillery units shooting a cannon and rocket prep, presumably to prepare for the attack scheduled for that morning. That immediately made me antsy; "why the hell aren't we shooting?!" I thought. I had the terrible feeling that my unit was "on it's ass," and might have possibly missed out on something. I immediately got on the radio and called the TOC, and asked the duty officer if we were supposed to be involved in any fire missions at that time. The duty officer seemed almost surprised by the question, and gave me a very curt "No." I shrugged my shoulders, and went about the business of making sure everybody in my battery was ready to go. Afterwards, I went back to my vehicle, popped open a MRE, and awaited further orders. At 0715 hours, I heard something over our command net about a cease fire, effective 0800 hours local (midnight Eastern Standard Time). I said to my driver, "what's this bullshit about a cease fire? Probably just another damn rumor."

0800 hours, 28 February 1991: LTC Knight, the battalion commander, made a net call giving us the official word of the cease fire. I could hardly believe it. I tuned into "Voice of America" on my short-wave radio and heard the story. I was happy, of course, but had a somewhat empty feeling that we had not quite finished the job. "Talk about an anticlimax," I thought.

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"Cease Fire"

For the next 13 days, we pulled occupation duty in Iraq. This duty was not pleasant -- boring, uncertain, and dangerous. There was much uncertainty -- would hostilities resume? When would we pull out of Iraq? When would we go back home? As is always the case in the interim period between the end of a war and redeployment, it was a leadership challenge trying to keep soldiers' morale up. There were four specific problems that sapped soldier morale: complacency, uncertainty, the anticlimactic nature of the

war's end, and souvenir hunting.

After a war, soldiers tend to let their guard down and become complacent. However, it was still a dangerous battlefield for us out there in Iraq. Our occupation sector had previously been the TAA (tactical assembly area) for the Iraqi Republican Guard *Tawakalna* Division. As a result, there were still lots of unexploded surface munitions on the ground; Iraqi minefields, cluster bomblets from B-52 strikes, and DPICM bomblets from artillery strikes. A soldier from Alfa Battery, Private Roger Valentine, lost his life when he encountered an unexploded MLRS DPICM bomblet. Moreover, there were still a lot of isolated Iraqi units out there, some of which had either not been informed of the cease fire, or did not care. One night, for example, we were alerted to engage a renegade Iraqi tank company.

I learned first hand how dangerous it was a few days after the cease fire. I was out one day surveying an abandoned Iraqi cantonment area with my driver, Specialist Malone. While checking out the area, I looked at my watch, and realized that I was about to be late to Private Valentine's memorial service, which was being held that day at Alfa Battery's position. Since I was running late, I decided to drive a straight line from my current location to Alfa Battery's position, rather than take the MSR (main supply route). That turned out to be a mistake, which came damn close to costing me my life.

As we were heading to Alfa Battery's position, I heard Malone ask in his Texas drawl, "Sir, what are those rods sticking out of the ground?" I looked up and saw numerous mounds of dirt with small metal rods sticking out of the ground, spaced about one every 10 square meters. I got my binoculars out, and scanned the area. With the binoculars, I could tell that the metal rods were actually detonating rods sticking out about 6-12 inches from the ground. Those were hastily buried anti-tank mines. We had wandered into a minefield, alone, miles away from the closest American unit. I immediately shouted, "STOP THE VEHICLE, MALONE!" Malone came to a screeching halt, and gave me a quizzical look. I explained the situation to him, and then called the TOC to let them know that I would be late for the memorial service.

My first course of action was to get out of the vehicle and ground guide the vehicle around the anti-tank mines. This minefield had obviously been laid by the Iraqis in an extremely hasty manner. It was not very dense; only one mine every ten meters or so. I had one foot out the door of the vehicle when I remembered that soldiers generally do not lay just anti-tank mines; they usually lay anti-personnel mines as well, to kill the engineers or infantrymen who dismount from vehicles to clear the anti-tank mines. It occurred to me that the Iraqis might have forgotten to do that, but I was not about to risk that.

Malone and I ended up leaning out of our respective doors to look for mines as we drove out of the minefield at five miles per hour. The carriage of the HMMWV had enough clearance to roll over the anti-tank mines without touching the detonating rods and setting off the anti-tank mines. What I was concerned about was one of the front wheels rolling over a mine and sending us sky high. Malone watched the left front wheel, and I watched the right front wheel. It took about 15-20 minutes to get out of the minefield, the longest 15-20 minutes of my life.

By the time we got to Alfa Battery, the memorial service had already started. All of the brass were there; the Division CG, the ADCM (Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver), the DIVARTY Commander, and, of course, the leadership of 3-82 FA. The Division Chaplain was delivering a sermon as I drove up. I tried to take my place as inconspicuously as possible, but both General Officers noticed me, the DIVARTY Commander shot me a dirty look, and the battalion commander sneered at me and pointed at his watch.

Apart from the excitement created by incidents like that, occupation duty was pretty boring. There was really very little to do. We could not move anywhere (unless absolutely necessary) because of the unexploded surface munitions strewn across the desert floor. That kept us from doing any meaningful training. There were no recreation facilities this far forward. Boredom and complacency quickly lowered the soldier morale that had been sky high during the war, and it was a leadership challenge trying to keep the troops pumped up.

We had a mission to clear a four square kilometer area, which helped morale by giving us something to

do, but that took only three days. "Clearing an area" involved policing up any stray Iraqi soldiers, collecting and destroying Iraqi small arms and ammunition, burying any Iraqi corpses we came across, and destroying or disabling any serviceable Iraqi vehicles we came across. We also went through bunkers looking for anything that might have intelligence value, such as overlays, OPLANS, Orders of Battle, etc.

One day, when clearing our area, we came across an abandoned Iraqi 2S1 artillery battalion. The 2S1 is a Soviet-made self-propelled 122 mm howitzer. We were stunned by what we saw; apparently, the entire battalion must have gotten into trucks and "bugged out," because there were 18 howitzers, in mint condition, still parked in their positions, with nobody in sight. Moreover, the command post bunkers contained a wealth of data that had potential intelligence value; maps, overlays, battle plans, etc. Caches of small arms and ammunition were stockpiled all over the place. We started looking around to survey the area to see what needed to be turned in and what needed to be destroyed in place.

As my First Sergeant, Jim Pape, was tooling around a sand dune in his HMMWV, he saw, much to his surprise, an Iraqi soldier urinating into the side of the sand dune. The Iraqi soldier, as astonished as he was, started fleeing on foot back toward his bunker. 1SG Pape pursued in his HMMWV, while simultaneously calling on the radio to get some "back up." He rounded up SFC Roy Woods, the battery motor sergeant, and some of his mechanics, and covered the entrance of the bunker that the Iraqi soldier had jumped into. Then, 1SG Pape pulled a smoke grenade out of his HMMWV, pulled the pin, let the spoon go, and tossed it into the bunker. Within 30 seconds, white HC smoke was billowing out of the bunker. Even sooner than that, not one, but five Iraqi soldiers fled the bunker!

1SG Pape and his people immediately took them into custody. The Iraqi soldiers were extremely scared and panicky; they got down on their knees and pled for mercy in Arabic. My people told them to shut up, lay down on the ground, and spread their arms. Once we got past the language barrier and got them to comply with that order, my troops started searching them. While this was going on, one of the Iraqis started shouting something out in Arabic into the bunker. "Shut the f*** up!" One of my alarmed soldiers said, worried now that there was yet another Iraqi still in the bunker. A few other soldiers moved closer to the mouth of the bunker, training their M16A2s into the mouth of the bunker.

Meanwhile, the wooden overhead cover of the bunker caught fire, apparently ignited by a mattress that had been set on fire by the fuze function of the smoke grenade. This finally motivated the last Iraqi into the bunker, a true fanatic, to come out and surrender. After having sat in that bunker for about ten minutes, sucking down HC smoke, that Iraqi soldier was obviously suffering from severe smoke inhalation. To say that his eyes were bloodshot was an understatement; his eyes were blood red. He was heaving, wheezing, and seemingly gasping for every breath as if it were his last. Fearing that he would die, we loaded him and the other EPWs into a 1/4 ton trailer, and took them to the EPW collection point at the BSA (brigade support area).

Enroute to the BSA, I called in the report to the TOC: "Six Iraqi EPWs, one Iraqi casualty, zero US casualties." That apparently got everybody's attention: the next voice I heard on the net was LTC Knight's, wanting to know what happened. I gave him a brief description of the incident, and told him that I would give him a more detailed report later, in person.

By the time we got to the EPW collection point, the Iraqi was going into heart failure. There was chaos in the prisoner pen, with on--looking Iraqi soldiers watching their dying comrade and chatting nervously in Arabic, and a MP asking me "What happened, sir?" in a somewhat accusatory manner. The Iraqi died sooner thereafter.

As I suspected, there was an inquiry. I had to write a sworn statement, as did other soldiers involved. The concern was that we had potentially violated rules of engagement (ROE); when the cease fire went into effect, our rules of engagement had changed from wartime ROE to peacetime ROE, the major difference being that under peacetime rules of engagement, we could use lethal force only in self-defense. Of course, in this particular case, we had used appropriate restraint, and, quite frankly, it was not our fault that the dead Iraqi had decided to stay in the bunker when 1SG Pape chucked the smoke grenade into there. We were cleared of all wrongdoing.

Other commanders were not so fortunate in the performance of their duties. One infantry company came across a bunker system. Their commander decided that the best way of clearing that particular bunker system was with fragmentation grenades. His soldiers were running from bunker to bunker, yelling "FIRE IN THE HOLE" as they chucked frag grenades into the bunkers. Meanwhile, a battalion commander from another unit was driving down the nearby MSR (main supply route), and heard the loud, distinct WHOMP! of frag grenades going off. He decided to investigate, saw American soldiers doing this, and put a stop to it. When the lieutenant colonel found the company commander, he gave him an ass chewing, the likes of which that young captain had probably never received. After that, he told the company commander's brigade commander, and the company CO was promptly relieved of command.

After we completed clearing our assigned sector, I conducted property inventories. These inventories had two purposes: First of all, to pass the time with something constructive to do, and secondly, to get a handle on my property. I was "signed for" (financially accountable for) about 20 million dollars of government property; I wanted to know what equipment I still had, and what equipment was missing. During peacetime operations, if a soldier or commander is missing property that he's signed for, he buys it. In wartime, the Army is usually much more lenient about writing off missing property as a "combat loss," if the accountable officer can offer a reasonable justification for having lost that item of property. At this juncture, I wanted to know what I was missing and why I was missing it. I was able to kill about four days with the inventories. Surprisingly, I had very few property losses; mostly camouflage nets that had fallen off vehicles during the attack into Iraq.

In addition to boredom, another morale killer was uncertainty, compounded by a lack of comprehensive and accurate information getting down to the troops. Soldiers had a lot of questions for which there were no good answers. Would hostilities resume again? How long would we stay in Iraq? When would we finally go home? Now that the war was over and Kuwait was liberated, many young soldiers, unaware of the political complexities of the situation, had a hard time understanding why it was necessary for us to stay in South West Asia. The bottom line was this: The situation was fluid, and the leadership did not know the answers to those questions. We were all starved for quality English language news broadcasts. We could not get AFN this far forward. We were able to get Voice of America (VOA) and British Broadcasting Service (BBS) broadcasts on our short-wave radios, but the Iraqis periodically jammed those broadcasts. It was almost as if the Iraqis knew what effect this would have on our morale.

Performing occupation duty in Iraq contributed to a "hollow feeling" we had -- whereas we savored our historic victory, we still could not help but feel that we did not "finish the job." This hollow feeling was not helped by the fact that Iraqi units, to include the remnants of the Iraqi Republican Guard (the same units that we would have enveloped and destroyed had it not been for the premature cease fire), were savaging the Kurdish and Shi'a rebellions that arose as a result of our swift victory.

Another soldier problem we had was "souvenir hunting." Iraqi weapons and ammunition were all over the place, and many soldiers wanted to bring home an AK-47, pistol, bayonet, or, worse yet, even an unexploded item of ordnance. The Theater commander's position on this was clearly stated: no captured weapons or ammunition of any type would be brought back to the United States as personal souvenirs. Units were allowed to bring back captured weapons to display in their museums back at home station (for example, we brought back an Iraqi 2S1 howitzer), but individual soldiers were not permitted to do this. Most soldiers had a lot of heartburn with this policy; therefore, there were many incidents of "selective disobedience," with soldiers squirreling away pistols, assault rifles, bayonets, and other contraband. In some units there were soldiers who were even stupid enough to try to smuggle unexploded ordnance, and they usually ended up killing or maiming themselves in the process. In one infantry unit, a soldier put a cluster bomblet in the left cargo pocket of his DCU. When he brushed up against a tracked vehicle, the bomblet detonated, blowing his leg off. Another soldier in another unit attempted to disassemble a DPICM bomblet, presumably to satisfy some sort of intellectual curiosity. Of course, the soldier had no idea what he was doing, and died when the bomblet went off in his face. Needless to say, the commanders of those outfits had a lot of explaining to do. It's tough to tell a parent or spouse that Johnny died AFTER the war because he was playing around with something he was not supposed to, and his officers and NCOs did not have enough common sense to tell him to stop.

I knew that if I did not get control of this problem ASAP in my unit, it would eventually get out of control, and jump up and bite me in the butt. Therefore, I had some of my soldiers dig an "amnesty pit." Then, I had a battery formation, and told my soldiers that, if they had any contraband, they had 24 hours to throw it in the amnesty pit, no questions asked. After that, they would face UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice) action if they were caught with any war souvenirs. The next day, I conducted a "health and welfare" inspection, otherwise known as a "shakedown." My officers and NCOs searched everything in the battery; all vehicles, connexes, footlockers, containers, and duffel bags, looking for Iraqi weapons and ammunition. There were a few soldiers who had not heeded my advice, and they ended up losing rank and pay for their temerity.

As the days rolled by, we started hearing news of U.S. soldiers returning home to a hero's welcome. Most of those soldiers were from the 82nd Airborne Division or 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized). Those divisions had been in South West Asia since the early days of the deployment in August 1990, and therefore went home first. That was CINCCENT's "first in, first out" policy. This was the only fair way to manage the redeployment schedule, and we understood that intellectually. However, on an emotional level, many soldiers could not help but feel a little jealous seeing fellow troopers going home to a hero's welcome while we were still stuck in the Iraqi desert. From a commander's standpoint, this made my job even harder, because it hurt soldiers' morale, attitude, and, ultimately, their job performance. Finally, on March 12, 1991, though, our Iraqi occupation duty came to an end. We received our new marching orders -- to pack everything up and move to Assembly Area *Killeen*, northwest of Hafar Al Batin.

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Homecoming

AA Killeen was a temporary holding area for the First Cavalry Division, located about halfway between the Euphrates River in Iraq and the port of Dammam in Saudi Arabia. We could not move directly to the port, because there was a limited amount of port, ship, and aircraft space available for redeploying units. Since other units were (at the time) using those resources to get home, we had to wait for them to clear out and free up some space for us to move to the port, clear customs, put our vehicles and heavy equipment on ships, and board aircraft and fly home. While we were at AA Killeen waiting for redeployment, we were expected to perform as many redeployment tasks as possible while maintaining sufficient readiness to move back into Iraq (if necessary) in case Iraqi troops did anything to violate the cease fire terms.

We implemented a much looser security posture in AA Killeen than we had in any of the preceeding five months. Even though we were still in the middle of the desert living in tents, AA Killeen had much more of a "garrison environment" feel, with tents lined up "dress right, dress", soldiers wearing soft caps instead of Kevlars, vehicles lined up in track parks (instead of dispersed tactically), and security consisting only of roving guards. Some officers, concerned about terrorist attacks, resisted this; the prevailing attitude, though, was that the payoff in increased soldier morale made the relatively low risk of a terrorist attack in the middle of the Saudi desert worth taking. As it turned out, the biggest security threat in AA Killeen was fending off thieving Bedouins who would try to sneak in and steal anything that was not nailed down.

Property accountability was the priority of the day in AA Killeen. The battalion, DIVARTY, and Division commanders directed all company-level commanders to conduct 100 percent inventories of all of their organizational property. The prevailing policy was this: if you identified it as having been lost while still in Saudi Arabia, the higher-ups would allow you to write it off as a "combat loss." If, however, you procrastinated and waited until you got back to Fort Hood and then tried to report an item of accountable property as missing, you would end up buying it. Most company-level commanders took

advantage of this and accounted for all of their property in theater; there were, however, a few commanders who waited until they got back to Fort Hood, and those people ended up spending a few paychecks for their laziness.

This liberal property accountability policy was well received for obvious reasons, and it was the most common sense policy to have in effect at the time. It was, nevertheless, abused by some people who would throw perfectly good equipment into burn pits because they were too lazy to clean it, then write it off as a "combat loss;" this unethical practice cost the taxpayers millions of unnecessary dollars, and commanders, for the most part, would "look the other way" whenever it happened.

On 6 April, we finally received orders to pack up our gear and make the long 500 kilometer road march to the port of Dammam to prepare for redeployment. Once we got there, we were billeted in a condominium complex called "Khobar Towers", in the nearby city of Al Khobar. Originally constructed by the Saudi government to give the Bedouins a place to live during the winter, Khobar Towers was handed over to CENTCOM after the Bedouins had repeatedly rejected offers to come out of the desert and spend the winter in Khobar Towers' nice apartments. After five and a half months of living in tents and vehicles and defecating in sawed off 55 gallon drums, it was pure heaven to live once again in hard billets and relieve oneself in a porcelain commode.

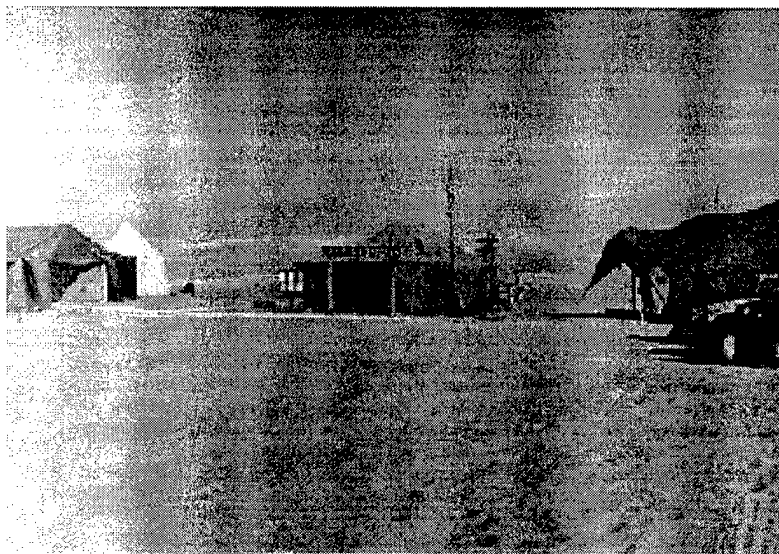
The first order of business at Dammam was to clean all of our vehicles and equipment thoroughly enough to pass the U.S. Customs' rigorous re-entry inspections. The Customs agents, concerned about introducing new organisms into the United States (which could have a devastating impact on US agriculture), demanded that every piece of equipment be absolutely spotless before being put on a USA-bound ship or aircraft. Additionally, Customs agents would conduct spot searches to ensure that soldiers were not attempting to ship home any contraband, such as Iraqi weapons, ammunition, and war trophies. Amnesty boxes were set up everywhere to give soldiers an option to "come clean" without fear of prosecution; nevertheless, some soldiers (and even officers) were stupid enough to try to ship contraband, and, when they got caught, were punished to the maximum extent possible under the UCMJ.

After we cleaned and shipped all of our equipment, we relaxed at Khobar Towers waiting for enough aircraft to be made available to fly us back home. For my battery and me, the big day finally came on April 22, 1991; after 192 days in the hell that was the desert of the Arabian peninsula, I boarded a chartered commercial aircraft and flew back to Robert Gray Army Airfield in Fort Hood, Texas. It was finally over....

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Camp St. Barbara



"Camp St. Barbara," the LSA (life support area) for C Battery, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, October-December 1990. This LSA was located in Assembly Area "Horse", the 1st Cavalry Division's assembly area in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. We named this LSA after St. Barbara, the patron saint of field artillerymen.

Peter Jennings' Visit



CPT Ronald A. Hoskinson, commander of Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, giving Peter Jennings of ABC News a commemorative T - shirt in Assembly Area "Horse", Saudi Arabia, Thanksgiving 1990.

Assembly Area Horse



LTC Kenneth R. Knight, Commander of 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, giving Peter Jennings a tour of Assembly Area Horse, Thanksgiving, 1990.

Observation Post Duty



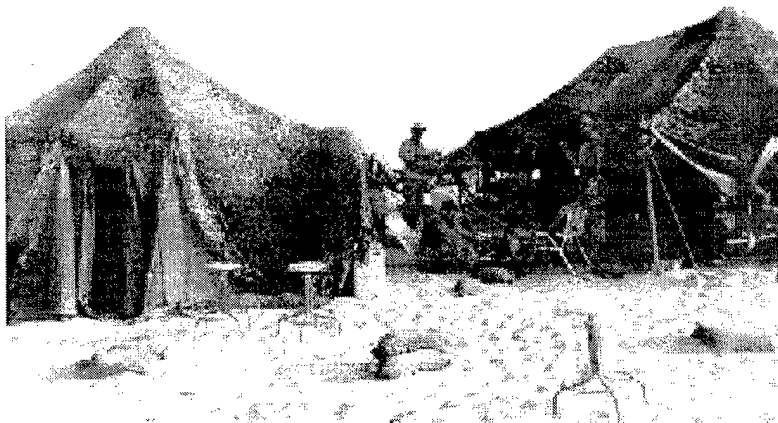
A soldier manning an observation post overlooking enemy held territory. This is perhaps one of the most dangerous and lonely jobs in the world.

Typical Living Conditions



Typical living conditions for the U. S. Army in Saudi Arabia during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Recreation in the Desert



13th Signal Battalion soldiers relaxing after a hard day of training. We did not have much free time, but what free time we had needed to be filled with recreational activities to keep our minds off of the stresses of the deployment. Typical recreational activities included card playing, reading, listening to music, and, of course, mail call.

CW2 Charlie Steward in AA Horse



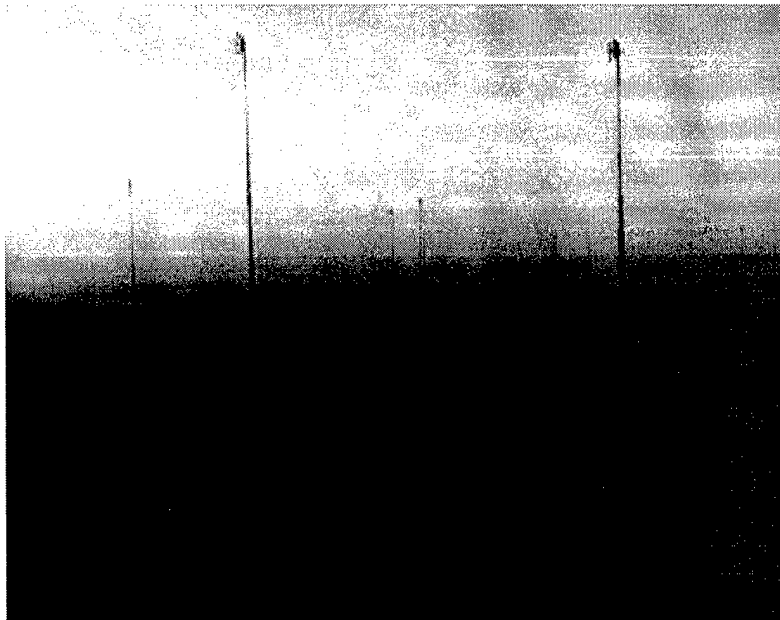
CW2 Charlie Steward in Assembly Area Horse. Notice the HMMWVs behind him covered with camouflage nets. These nets are used to conceal vehicles and equipment from aerial observation.

Forward Assembly Area



The 13th Signal Battalion's Forward Assembly Area in the Ruqi Pocket, Saudi Arabia, January 1991.

"Antenna Farm"



The 13th Signal Battalion's "antenna farm" in the Ruqi pocket January-February 1991. One of the 13th Signal's responsibilities was to set up and maintain a reliable communications network for the 1st Cavalry Division.

CW2 Norman Jarvis



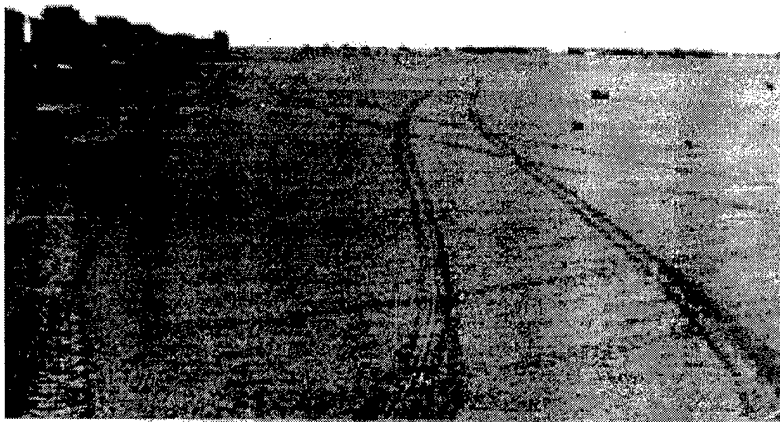
Chief Warrant Officer Norman "C.J." Jarvis, Battalion Maintenance Technician of the First Cavalry Division's 13th Signal Battalion. A good friend and one hell of a soldier. This photo was taken the day before the ground attack into Iraq.

"Comrades in Arms"



Some of C.J. Jarvis' "comrades in arms" relaxing before the ground campaign.

The Ground Campaign



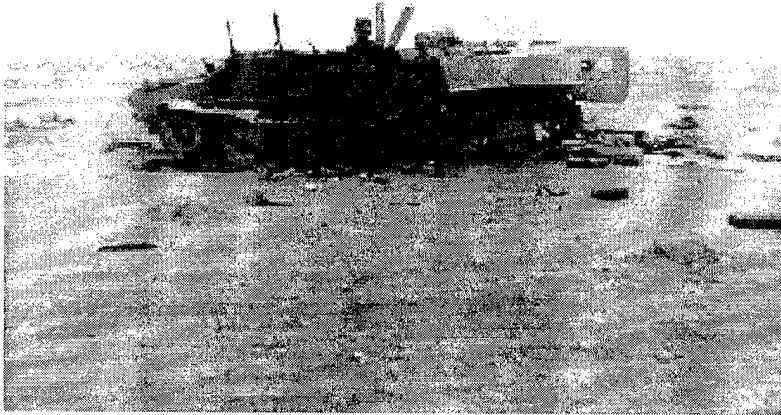
The 13th Signal Battalion moving out toward the 1st Infantry Division breach on February 26, 1991.

Destroyed Iraqi Tank



A destroyed Iraqi tank.

A destroyed Iraqi APC



A destroyed Iraqi APC.
